

THE
NEW LOOK

THE MAGAZINE OF CINEMA & TELEVISION FANTASY NOV 99 70p

STARBURST

THIS ISSUE:

WE LOOK AT THE MAKING OF
**BBC'S DAY OF
THE TRIFFIDS**

THE INTERVIEW WITH JAMES ALANSON, DIRECTOR OF
THE NEW **BLAKE'S 7** and
HITCH HIKERS GUIDE TO THE GALAXY

PLUS FEATURES IN
MONSTER MOVIE POSTERS
DISNEY'S **SLEEPING BEAUTY**
THIEF OF BAGHDAD
AND LOTS MORE



**BBC'S TV SERIES
DAY OF THE
TRIFFIDS**

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STEVE DREWETT.
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MAIDENS**

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STARBURST LETTERS

CORMAN DEFENSIVE

I really like your magazine, especially the *Things to Come* section and your coverage of **The Monster Club**. Your mag is the only one to keep me up to date on this movie. Thanks!

I also liked John Brosnan's article in issue 34 and I want to say that I liked both his books, *Magic* and *The Horror People*. They are two of my favourites. Well, at least he'll know of four people who have read his books.

However, the main reason I am writing is to say that I disagree with his statement that Roger Corman is the most over-rated director in history. Corman's Edgar Allan Poe series has never been topped! And considering his budgets for these movies, it's even more of an achievement, because they look so expensive and most have very good stories. The photography in the Poe series is also excellent. So in my opinion, Corman deserves all the praise he gets.

Long live Vincent Price!

John Renzel,
San Jose, CA,
United States

The *Starburst* team are all fans of the Corman Poe films too, John. Really! Interesting you should mention the photography. Most of the Poe series was photographed by Floyd Crosby (the exceptions were *Tomb of Ligeia* photographed by Arthur Grant, and *Mask of the Red Death* filmed by Nicolas Roeg). Crosby was responsible for the cinematography on 79 movies between the years of 1931 and 1967, from *High Noon* for Fred Zinneman, to an all-time low of *Black Zoo* (1963) for Robert Gordon. And if anyone can tell us what Crosby did between 1967 and 1981, we'd like to hear from them.

EXCALIBUR AND ART

With *Excalibur* reviews in *Starburst* now taking on a distinctly "anti" flavour, I think it is time to add my voice to that of Phil Edwards and defend the movie.

Like Paul Maled (Letters, *Starburst* 37) I risked the price of a cinema ticket after reading your contradictory reviews. Two and a half hours later I staggered out, stunned by the amazing visual and emotional experience of the movie. Nicol Williamson and all the other actors were superb, the special

effects were truly amazing. I have now seen the film four times and it defies comparison. To say that it is inferior to *Clash of the Titans*, as John Brosnan does, is to insult art. Incidentally, I have not yet seen a picture of Paul Geoffrey, who gives such an awe-inspiring performance as Perceval in the film—could you print one for my *Excalibur* collection? And in answer to one of the questions raised about the "best fantasy artist" in *Starburst* 37, I have to say that the best fantasy artist, and indeed artist of all time, is surely Brian Froud. Like him or loathe him he has more talent than Jones, Frazetta, Foss, Giger, Vallejo and the two Hildebrandts put together....!

Pip Reeve,
Brighton.

You've raised an interesting point with your letter, Pip. The reason we printed conflicting reviews of *Excalibur* is because opinion was so diametrically opposed. The question is, "Do the readers of *Starburst* like this attempt at fair representation or would they prefer the team to be consistent in its opinions?" Let us know. And still on the subject of reviews...

READER'S PREVIEWS

Starburst 37 was one of the best issues yet. The reviews in your magazine are far better than any of the competitors' as they are honest and point out the mistakes in a film rather than writing what the fans want to hear.

Will there be a report on the Edinburgh festival? There were three or four science fiction films including two major ones. *Escape from New York* and the European premiere of *Heavy Metal*. I saw *Heavy Metal* (in the presence of the animators, so we were told) and thought it was excellent. I can highly recommend it.

The film is composed of six different stories, each by different artists. The illustration is high quality like the American magazine the film takes its name from. The first two stories, *Harry Canyon* about a taxi driver in the New York of 2031, and *Den* a sword and sorcery story, got the best laughs. Angus McKie's *So Beautiful and So Dangerous* comes a close third. I expect you'll be covering this film yourselves.

Anyway, keep up the good work.

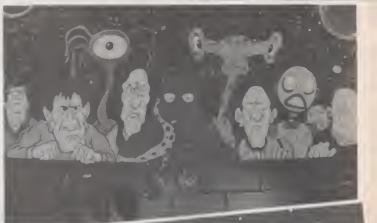
Andy Wallace,
Edinburgh.

Way back in *Starburst* 32, on the letters page you said that you would have coverage of *Dragon-slayer*. I have seen the film and I think it is the best film to come from Walt Disney so far. But still no review.

There is a new film out called *Wolffen*. I have also seen this, in which there is a peck of fierce animals attacking people, reelly gruesome. Is that going to be reviewed?

Simon P. Williams,
Swansee,
S. Wales.

The general policy of *Starburst* is that we try to time our reviews to coincide with the national release of a film. The last we heard, nobody knew when *Wolffen* was scheduled for release. And *Heavy Metal* is due to be shown to journalists around the middle of September, still in the future as this is being written.





A TALE OF TWO ADS

Thank you for your "Tale of Two Ads" in issue 36. In fact both of these Companies are on thin ground because the original illustration was done by Les Edwards about five years ago for the cover of a Corgi book called *Starchild* and neither of them have asked for permission to use it.

Nightmare City is almost an exact copy but, to be fair, **Incubus** is really just using the same idea rather than a copy of the illustration. Thanks to you we're now following up **Nightmare City** but I don't think we can bother the **Incubus** people. Funny though. Particularly as Les Edwards went over to Canada to work on this very film (to design a monster) and may have left a proof of the Corgi book cover behind.

Alison Eldred,
 Quantum Artists Ltd.,
 London.

Glad to be of service, Alison. Keep us posted on further developments, please.

ALTERED STATEMENTS

Having read John Brosnan's review of *Altered States* I must put pen to paper to state how diverse film critics can be in their views.

John Brosnan sums up the film as a cinematic experience justified as being "the 2001 of the 1980s." He also states that it is a believable film, ie, even the scientists in *Altered States* talk like real scientists. Whereas, when I read an article in the *Daily Express* by critic Ian Christie, he describes the film as being too far fetched, ridiculous, etc, on the whole giving the film a bad review. Finally, I watched BBC's *Now Showing* programme with Michael Wood. Wood described the film as being "a lot of

mixed-up clap-trap!" thus giving the film a very grave review.

Who can you believe?
 By this time you've seen so many different reviews of a film, you're not sure whether to see the film or not!

I would like to add that the New Look **Starburst** is terrific and well worth paying the extra five pence for.

Matt Carter,
 Oundle,
 Northants.

Alan McKenzie replies: "I have been aware of a major rift between the opinions expressed in **Starburst** and those put forward in the national press. It seems that while we at **Starburst** enjoyed *Altered States* immensely, the newspaper

critics hated it. Perhaps what Ian Christie meant when he said that film was too far fetched was that it was difficult for a person of such limited imagination to accept..."

"The problem of who to believe is further compounded that the film **Outland** was generally praised by the critics in the National Press as being a slick adventure, a sort of **High Noon** in space. Unfortunately, John Brosnan felt (and I agree) that film suffered for exactly the same reason. It is a sorry state of affairs when all a director needs to do to get good reviews for his latest effort is to take the plot of an old movie, transpose it into a space setting, throw in a few Ridley Scott lighting effects and, bingo, instant critical success. I wonder whether the public will be fooled as easily as the critics."

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FLICKERS BY TIM QUINN & DICKY HOWETT



THINGS TO COME

SUPERMAN III...

will not be called that! It will have a proper title. And who knows, probably a Bond-like title song to go with it. Producer Pierre Spengler has no idea what that title will be for the moment, but "we are 99% sure about our writers and director." Shooting is due to begin in the Spring with a release already dated and slated for the summer of '83. Book now... Despite his various differences with the producers (he has called them "Untrustworthy, devious and unfortunate as people"), Chris Reeve is the only name definitely committed to the third flick... which I feel sure Richard Lester will be handling. (Lester, thus far, seems the only person on a Salkind film, and *Supie II* was his third for them, who hasn't ended up suing them.

Spengler also says he still holds an option for Margot Kidder to return as Lois Lane—something of a surprise considering her ill will towards the production team. She's called them "dishonest" and "cheats" because they still owe her a disputed 40,000 dollars. Their reply? But you've guessed... it's all a question of interpretation.

Margot would appear to be doing her best to get out of the next film, by stripping off and flashing it all about in her latest film, *Some Kind of Hero*. Come to that, Valerie Perrine, too, has recently posed (again) for *Playboy*... in the raw. Both girls know full well that part of the DC Comics deal with the Salkinds is that *Superman* actors must not be associated with X-rated films. X means porno in American terms, although to quaint folk like the DC folk, it tends to mean just nudity in films. Everyone neatly forgot that both Margot and Valerie had previously exposed all in their earlier films, as well as *Playboy* spreads. But it must be difficult for the DC boys to miss Valerie's latest appearance in the bunny mag. She's on the cover. In a Clark Kent pose—in specs and ripping open jacket and shirt to reveal the famous costume undergarment, which is rather better filled out than Chris Reeve's set.

HOWZAT AGAIN?

Okay, okay, I'll try to explain... for I'm sure you were as baffled as I was to hear last month that the *Supie* films are, or were, still supposed to be as much as \$5-million in the red. It's not easy. Nothing about filmland finance is easy. That's how the little fellas get ripped off so easily by the big companies.

At last count, the budget for the two movies totalled 109 million dollars! That's 79 mil' on *Superman I* and 30 mil' on the sequel. Richard Donner, for one, denies such figures and suggests the producers are inflating the production costs of his film to prevent him ever

seeing his 6.25 percent. "Ironically," comments Spengler, "it was largely his excesses that caused the cost increase."

Yes, yes, but how come the debt to the banks? The need for cash to complete the first runaway movie, meant the production team had to sell off their overseas release rights to Warner Brothers (which already had the US release sewn up). Therefore, Warners end not the Salkinds had the larger slice of the first film's take of \$82.5 million. Warners are also in for a hefty slice of the overseas business of the sequel, but not all of it this time... which naturally means more loot is slowly finding its way back into the producers' coffers.

They need it. The third flick will cost in the region of \$35 million. But isn't that what they said about the first one...?

Incidentally, I heard in Los Angeles last month that Richard Pryor—Mergot Kidder's latest co-star—is chasing after a role in the third Super movie. As the *Star Wars* films now have a black character, why not *Superman*? Besides, Pryor hasn't had to take anyone to court in such a long time.

SUPER CLERICS

With *Death Trap* in the can, and Coppola's *Trap Door* project postponed, Christopher Reeve has time for a new assignment. Lots of fine new robes, too, though far removed from *Supie's* zoot suit. He plays the lead in *Monsignore*—a Vatican cardinal with troublesome Mafia connections. Frank Perry directs from an Abraham Polonsky (*Tall Them Willie Boy is Here*) script. The producer is Brian De Palma's old backer, Frank Yablans.

They all find it pratty crowded in the Vatican. Zod himself, Terence Stamp, is already there shooting *Florestano Vancini's Death in the Vatican* with the Spanish lovely Angela Molina. And he'll still be working when Super-Chris flies in come October. By plane, I presume.

KING SIZE DEBUT

Top horrorsmith Stephen King is acting in one of his six stories in George Romero's *Creepphshow* movie. Steve has the main role in the third main segment, *The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill*. He plays the farmer rubbing his hands with glee when a meteorite lands on his property—think of the money he can charge people to come see it, photograph it and touch it. "In fact," says producer Richard Rubenstein, "the people who do touch it have another problem..." Spaceweeds, Steve calls it.

The King has already acted for The Romero in *KnightRiders*. That was not so much a debut as a walk-on. He only has a couple of lines in the biker-jousting flick fast becoming known as *Ivanhoe Meets Easy Rider*.



(Both Stephen King and Richard *Creepphshow* film in an upcoming issue Rubenstein will be talking about the... Stay tuned).

THE THING II

John Carpenter has stretched his usual team somewhat for his re-make of *The Thing*, now back in British Columbia after completing interiors at Universal studios. As well as all the usual folk, like star Kurt Russell (for the third time) and cinematographer Dean Cundey (for the fourth time), John has got *The Howling*'s Rob Bottin creating his monster(s) and Albert Whitlock in charge of the very special visual effects.

As he told us in *Starburst 37*, Carpenter has gone back to the original book, *Who Goes There?*, which inspired the Howard Hawks film, but taking up the challenge that Hawks and his director Christian Nyby (not to mention their minuscule budget) threw out: Namely, that the thingie from the flying saucer can assume the shape of its victims' lunch. "Whatever it sets, it can absorb and imitate and take on its form," says John. "Within a few weeks, it could imitate the whole world." Or Universal's Black Tower?

Rob Bottin, therefore, has the key task of producing these varying shapes and sizes. He was working on sets next to the boss at Universal (Carpenter's first time in a major Hollywood studio) while John shot the Alaskan camp interiors with a cast of predominantly new faces. With his effects-ridden movie costing as much as \$13-million (or a third of *Heaven's Gate*), John has changed his mind about going for big names. Kurt Russell heads the cast, which also includes David Moffat, the android from TV's *Logan's Run*, Richard Dysart, T.K. Carter and seven other guys I've never heard of. There's no women in the film and apparently, although this takes some believing, no Charles Cyphers, either. If so, this would be the first Carpenter trip Chuck has missed since *Assault on Precinct 13*.

John, of course, loves the Hawks movie. "Really, the first modern monster from outer space movie," he calls it. "It was done shortly after the big flying saucer sighting over Mount Rainier in 1948, which caused a big UFO scare. This probably inspired Hawks to make the film." Seeing the flick as a kid inspired Carpenter to make movies and, in fact, to re-make *The Thing* some day. He nearly missed his chance though. I lately discovered that four or five years ago, Universal had arranged for Tobe Hooper to make the movie. All seemed set, until co-producer Stuart Cohen called up Carpenter. That, as Hooper might say, is another example of the University of Southern California Mafia at work. But it should result in a better movie, that's for sure.

Anyway, friend Hooper has a USC Mafia assist on his newest outing, *Poltgeist*. It's written and exec-produced by some fella named... Spielberg, is it?

GOING SOLO

As Carpenter's *Thing* is officially a Larry

Turman and David Foster production for Universal (and has been so for five years on their shelf), John's usual producer associate, Debra Hill, is free to plough other filmic furrows. She's preparing a couple of projects, including *Final Move*, by the *Shft* author Ernest Tydman.

But first...

HALLOWEEN II

Donald Pleasance and Jamie Lee Curtis return in the delayed *Halloween* sequel for another battle with *The Shape*—a certain Rick Werlock this time out instead of Carpenter's pal Nick Castle. And rather than another Carpenter crew alumnus, art director Tommy Wallace, directing as first planned, this sequel has been presented to newcomer Rick Rosenthal as his feature debut. John and Debra chose him on the strength of his short film, *The Toyer*. And that, just to break the Hollywood mould of the last few movie-brat years was an AFI (American Film Institute) and not a USC short. The new movie opens in the United States in October. And not, by the way in 3-D, no matter what you read in other journals. (That'll teach you to bother with other publications!) Carpenter and Hill, who wrote *Halloween II* together, discussed it, being old-time 3-D freaks, but found no radical improvement on the faulty systems many on today's market. Or to put it another way, they don't have the inside clout with the United Artists Theatres combine's new system that George Romero does. That's why George will be the first of the heavyweights into this fresh 3-D format. John and Debra are working on it, though. Instead of *Hawks' The Thing* on the baby-sat kids' tv this time, it will be... *Night of the Living Dead*!

SNAKES ALIVE!

"Snakes!" said Indiana Jones. "Why did it have to be snakes...?"

Because all the world hates them, that's why. And now that *Raiders of the Lost Ark* have put the reptiles back on the screen in a big way, prepare for more of the same. First off the bat is *Rattles*, an Italo-American co-production starring the late Bing Crosby's son (or is Bing so old hat now that one should say "Mary Crosby's brother?") and his fiancée. It's really a slithery re-run of *Jaws*, complete with locations in Bruce the Shark's home stretches of Martha Vineyard. If, that is, the locals agree. They've had more than enough of film units since the two *Jaws* films and are none too ecstatic about the thought of live rattlers being imported to their island which, thus far, is free from poisonous snakes. Producer Wiley Reynolds—who has given himself the Roy Scheider-like role of the police chief—insists all the snakes real and/or mechanical, will be shot in his home state of Florida. In short: the only rattlesnakes to visit Martha's Vineyard

will be certain members of the crew... The story has a giant rattler wreaking havoc on the island after escaping from a crashed helicopter.

Bing's boy, Harry Crosby is 22, and has lately completed his years of drama and music training at LAMBDA in London. His girlfriend, Donna McCowan, has the more profession experience of the two—if you can call acting in *Bye Bye Birdie* on stage with Joey Travolta and Tab Hunter "experience". She will play the producer's, not Harry's, girl in the film. And don't scoff too much about a Crosby in a horror-flick. It was Bing's film company which bankrolled those raty affairs, *Willard* and *Ben*.

QUICK TAKES

As expected *Raiders of the Lost Ark* now drawing ahead of *Superman II* in the American box-office battle. Closer behind than the Bond film are *Escape From New York* and *Terzan The Ape Man*... The message is obvious: 007 needs Carpenter or Bo... Mia Farrow's British thriller, *Full Circle* (1977), finally opened in the States. So if you're Lakering it, beware of *The Hunting of Julia*. Same film. New title... Much the same could be said of NBC's new television series, *The Powers of Matthew Star*. It's really our six-mill' man in a new guise and name—and effects... Just love the *Variety* review of Columbia's new comedy: "*Nobody's Perfect* is unbelievably stooped." Producers just ask for a basting with ridiculous titles like that... Harrison Ford's co-star in *Blade Runner*, Daryl Hannah, picked up quickly by *Grosses/Blue Lagoon* man, Randall Kleiser for *Under The Sun*... Former 007 stars, George Lazenby (a one-time Bond in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*) and Corinne Clery, Roger Moore's French co-star in *Moonraker*, are teamed up for *The Last Horror* in Italy. For the *Rattlers*' team incidentally... Director Wes Craven is producing a new version of *The Pit and the Pendulum*...

GETTING BETTER

Britain's dismal film-making scene about to improve with a flood (well, a bunch) of new projects which might not mean that 1981 is our worst year ever after all. (Or not in films, that is) Fresh features include Alan Parker's *The Wall* based on the Pink Floyd's album and a *Scum* sequel called... what else but *Scrubbers*...

GETTING WORSE

The following news is hardly surprising. *Raise the Titanic*, that white elephant of an endeavour contravening the Trades Description Act by calling itself a film, has all but sunk Lord Lew Grade's filmmaking arm, ITC. An arm and a leg more like it! It proves what I've always said about his lordship's low-grade movies. You can't make movies with television sales in mind, stuffed with members of

THINGS TO COME

Hollywood's Wax Museum, and expect them to sell in *cinemas*. His wholly esine choice of films has, of course, lately culminated in **The Legend of the Lone Ranger**—a Titanic on horseback. His leading man, Clinton Spilsbury (if you believe such a moniker) is so awful, he had to be dubbed from start to finish by Stacy Keach's brother, Jim.

ITC now keeps on the very slender threads of **The Muppets**—and they're not what they used to be: tele-familiarity, like the other kind, breeds contempt—and Jim Henson and Gary Kurtz's **Dark Crystal** science fiction caper. With puppets. Which sounds a good description of Lord Lew's **Saturn 3**, when you come to think about it...

YOU — JANE ME - SILENT

Bo Derek's **Tarzan The Ape Man**, an Irish fella, Myles O'Keefe, is missing from the tub-thumping publicity trail in America. Apparently, he's been told to keep his mouth shut (as he does for most of the movie). It's a part of his contract, same as for the ape-man he replaced at the last minute, Lee Canallo. Just why producer Bo and director John Darak inserted such a vow of silence in the actors' deals, no one knows. Or maybe those that know are similarly contracted to shut up. Naturally all the publicity is centred upon Bo and one story goes that neither of the Dereks want anyone bad-mouthing their film. Locations in Sri Lanka were not, I hear, as happy as the publicity hype likes to suggest. O'Keefe's ban ends about now. Stand by for the scandal...

EXCALIBORE?

Most recent entry in the Excalibur Stakes in America's small-budget affair, **The Sword and The Sorcerer**. Produced by former (sexploitation makers, Brandon and Marianna Chasa, the Los Angeles project (actually being shot in LA, too) is directed and co-written by Albert Pyun and features an odd cast of such wooden performers as George Maharis (stand up those who remember **Rose 66** or **The Satan Bug** movie... okay, fella, sit down) and Britain's Michael York clone, Simon MacCorkindale. But I shouldn't be too hard on it, for the film also features dependable heavy Richard Lynch and the eye-achingly gorgeous Kathleen Beller. For her, I'll go see it...

BORO BATTLE

A huge row has blown up over the new French movie, **Dr Jekyll and the Women**. And that terribly come-on title is part of it. The film, made by the Polish director Walerian Borowczyk, was called, according to its scenario, **The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Miss Osbourne**. And Boro (as he's known, thankfully, to some of us) is far from pleased with the last-minute title

switch. In one Paris newspaper he called his producers, Robert Kuperberg and Jean-Pierre Labrande, "amateurish and uncultured" for imposing such a change on his work and apparently, asking him to well, you know, Boro, kinda sex it up a bit. The producers were hardly delighted in reading that. They've slapped a libel suit on their director (it was his second film for them). Kuperberg says the new title was at the distributor's insistence, and rather than wanting the film to be porno-ad up, they'd asked Borowczyk to cool it down. So it goes...

No wonder Kuperberg and Labrande are taking so long to announce (or maybe find) a director for their re-make of Michael Powell's **Peeping Tom**.

FRIDAY FEVER

Allow me to apologise if I got this wrong before, but there are two comedy send-ups of the **Friday The 13th** movies on their way here, not just the one previously mentioned in these notes. Roger Corman's version is **Saturday The 14th**, with husband and wife team Richard Benjamin and Paula Prentiss—while Alfred Sole, trying to recover from the insipid **Tanya's Island**, no doubt, has lately completed **Thursday The 12th** with comedienne Kaye Ballard. Get it? Got it? Good.

I've a **Sunday The 15th** if anyone wants to buy it. I knocked it out, like the others, in 93 seconds.

INTROVISION!

And, in a sense, much of the Coppola-cum Myrmidon futuristics are already here. And in movies. Thanks to Introvision... best utilised so far in Peter Hyams' **Outland**. Not that you can see it. With Introvision, you can't see the blue lines... or the joins. The process, co-owned by Howard Hughes' old company, RKO Pictures, and an outfit called TN Productions (named after Introvision backer and now president, Tom Naud), was also glimpsed, if noticed at all, in Lily Tomlin's adventures as **The Incredible Shrinking Woman** and Bob Newhart's less successful jape, **The First Family**. **Outland** is what's selling it to the rest of the Hollywood companies, though. In Pittsburgh, too. George Romero is planning to make use of Introvision in his film of Stephen King's **The Stand**—and thus have much of the cost of what has to be George's most expensive production... if and when he starts it. (About 1983, is my guess.)

The guys who actually dreamt up the process, John Eppolito and Les Robley, hate hearing Introvision described as a special effect. They think such terminology spells science fiction only to Hollywood. And Introvision's use can be far wider than that... as their promo reel shows to great effect. They have one shot of a bishop, or cardinal, or someone religious and important, walking through an immense cathedral. The actor only exists. Introvision, a kind

of sandwich of front and back projection mattes, supplies the fake cathedral... on photographic plates. When they shot the scene, the cleric chieftie was walking round on a totally empty sound stage.

John Eppolito had been working away on his process for about four years when a friend of his mentioned the work to Tom Naud. "He told us what John had accomplished something incredible and persuaded us to see for ourselves." (Us is Naud and his partner Pack Prior). "What we saw was so astounding, I decided then and there to give up my work as a producer and writer in films and concentrate on helping John see his work to completion." That took another three and a half years of flattening all the kinks in a process that now enables actors to even disappear behind any of the photo-mattes, come out of the other side... and even cast a shadow on them if necessary.

In all, Introvision supplied about 50 special effects shots for **Outland**—and completed them in a month. And that's fast for optical effects. There's no hanging around to see if they work, either. No waiting for rushes next day, or after sending the actor's shots to the optical workshops for three months or more, before the result could be viewed. The director can check the effect of the effect right there on the set. By simply looking through the camera lens.

Peter Hyams has such confidence in the process that he decided to use it on **Outland** after shooting one take in Introvision. Now he's about the best salesman for the system. "No wonder," grins Tom Naud. "His film was brought for \$13-million and because of Introvision, it looks like it cost... up to twice that. In fact, without Introvision, he probably wouldn't have done a lot of the shots he did. Because the full effectiveness of the dual screen film system depends on any director's imagination."

The research work on Introvision cost about a million and a half dollars. From **Outland** onward, it's all profit. Not that John Eppolito and his staff of cinematographer Bill Mesa and matte printer Tim Donahue, have yet given up on trying to improve further on their revolutionary use of perspective and illusion. If that's possible!

BIG BUCKS

Since the debacle of Michael Cimino's egotistical **Heaven's Gate** film, Hollywood studios are getting mighty worried about films with larger than average budgets. Latest victim: Peter Yates' plans for a sword and sorcery number called **The Dragons of Krull**. Yates, who made his last two movies, **Breaking Away** and **Eyewitness** for a total of about 11 million dollars, says **Krull** will require 25 million to make. Columbia say that's at least five million too much. The fight goes on. It looks as if British shooting will help lower the costs.



THINGS TO COME

CONNOR PLUMBS DEPTHS

After the success of his first American feature *Motel Hell*, British director Kevin Connor seems all set to make *Death Line* underwater. He's been named as director of *Goliath Awakes*, a four-hour television mini-series about the survival of 240 people trapped for 40 years in the wreckage of a sunken ocean liner. This rather unlikely two-part story is being produced by Columbia Pictures Television for Operation Prime Time, a company whose only other television product was the less-than-successful 1980 version of Harold Robbin's *The Dream Merchants*. *Goliath Awakes* is due to be screened in the US this November.

John Fleming



JEDI MAKER

Thanks to George Lucas (and isn't everyone saying that these days), Richard Marquand has solved a nagging problem in his family household.

When the Welsh director was making his second movie, *The Birth of the Beatles*, his teenage daughter came home with some astonishing news she'd discovered while scanning albums in a record store.

"Hey Dad," said she, "didja know Paul McCartney was in another group before Wings?"

Such generation-gap gaffs are not likely to be dropped now that Dad's working on the pre-production for the January 13 take-off date of his fourth movie, *A Little Thing Called Love*. The *Revenge of the Jedi*.

It's one helluva jump from *The Legend* in 1978 to the third *Star Wars* movie. Lucas, it transpires, has been impressed by all of Marquand's movies, notably his latest endeavour, *Eye of the Needle*, co-starring Donald Sutherland and Kate Nelligan, and shot at Shepperton Studios and on the Isle of Mull.

This Lucas leg-up means a post-ponement of Marquand's previously semi-arranged plans for a *Low Grade* production, and a pet movie scheme in America. It should, though, rush his American dream to fruition rather more quickly than any *Low Grade* project would have done.

"I'd like to make a picture in America very much," he commented while still shooting *Needle*. "I wasn't keen until I made this film. But having done a large picture, I think I'd enjoy the challenge of working there."

He has written his own subject for the States. "It's set in at the end of the war in a small desert town, and centres on a character who returns to find an America which is changing... becoming more corrupt. Specifically, there's major corruption happening around an Indian reservation, and water-rights."

"On the surface, I think it's got all the elements of a fast moving commercial picture. But there's an undercurrent of *Chinatown*, *Kluge* and *All the President's Men* to it."

Despite his *Jedi* assignment, Marquand says he's not an action-movie man. "I couldn't direct something like *The Towering Inferno*. If, in fact, *Eye of the Needle* had been a straightforward action film, I couldn't have been that interested. But it's to do with human values as well—lying, and deceit, truth and honesty. It's to do with the kind of jam that governments put people into when they declare war... put them in uniform and make them follow orders."

"I need that human dimension." And that's the dimension, of course, which George Lucas and Gary Kurtz are resolved to keep above all the Industrial Light and Magic effects. That's why they go out of their way to hire different directors for each segment of the ongoing *Skywalker* story. To add a slightly different style or focus to the overall

development," explains Kurtz. "So that when they're eventually seen in a group, one could see how the individual filmic styles added to the development of the characters."

SF ON STAGE

Hyde Park exploding with royal wedding fireworks is one thing. But can you imagine the place with huge rocket ship, laboratory, mountain-top launchpad and sundry caves...? Could happen if some entrepreneur brings the latest American space show to town. It's quite a *Hitchhiker's Guide*-like comedy called *The Day They Came from Way Out* and has been running in Seattle parks—for free, no less! There's no takers for this Empty Space Theatre group production as yet. Maybe our showbiz gamblers are keener on the more complex multimedia show, *The Space Works*—already booked to tour Japan, Australia and New Zealand after its New York debut next summer. (Well, of course they're more interested in this one—it's too expensive to stage for free.)

Directed by film-maker Joseph Strick, *The Space Works* needs what the Americans call an "environmental theatre" designed as a 2010 AD spaceport. Lasting 75 minutes, the show is, basically an intergalactic journey, complete with filmed simulations and the more real centrifugal effects of acceleration after launching.

Before the flight takes off—or the audience takes their seats—ticket-buyers can take part in various intelligence and other tests, games in fact, based on real astronauts' exams. *Space Invaders* for real!

MORE MAX

Down-under star Mel Gibson has lately completed the inevitable *Mad Max II* movie. He departs from his biker image, however, in his next release, the mighty war epic of *Gallipoli*—the first film from Associated R and R Films headed by Australia's most successful tycoons, showbiz man Robert Stigwood and publishing magnate Rupert Murdoch. They obviously like Mel's act. He's just signed for another R & R movie, to be custom-made for his talents, it says here. And Stigwood has packed Mel for two more for his own RSO Films. He must see Mel as a new Travolta.

CONNER CONTINUES

With *Motel Hell* behind him (so to speak), Kevin Connor has started his second Hollywood movie—in Japan. Written and produced by two former publicity men, the film is called *Where Evil Dwells*. And Kevin has where the role to his old-time *Forgotten* buddy, Doug McClure. Also among the evil, veteran Edward Albert and that star guest from that wedding, (and very salty

French headlines just lately) Susan George.

OSCARS STAR

Back in America after such globe-trotting dross as *Mama Dracula*, Louise Fletcher has joined Ooug Trumbull's *Brainstorm* of a movie in North Carolina. This casting gives Ooug's movie at least three Oscar-winners—Louise, Christopher Walken and Cliff Robertson. (Now name the movies they collected their trophies for and you can win... our permission to buy next month's issue! Answers below.)

THE RETURN OF OZ

No relation to Muppet man and sometime Yoda Frank Oz, Disney are bringing Oz back to the screen. Forty two years after the release of the most recent movie of L. Frank Baum's creation, President and Chief Operating Officer of Walt Disney Productions Ron Miller has announced that the studio's plan to film *Return to Oz*.

"We have owned all of Baum's Oz books, except *Wizard of Oz*, for thirty years," stated Miller. "This will not be a sequel or a continuation of MGM's 1939 film, but will draw on characters and situations from other books in the formation of a totally new story with an entirely different look."

Disney have signed Walter Murch and Gill Dennis to write an original screenplay, *Return to Oz*, based on Baum's Oz series. Murch won an Academy Award for the sound on *Apocalypse Now* and was an Oscar nominee for his editing of *Julia* and son on *The Conversation*. He makes his directing debut with Disney's live action feature.

Shooting is scheduled to begin next year.

NEXT MONTH

This column comes from *Deaville's* alt-American film festival in France. Where, or so I'm told, I'll have a chance to meet the Lucasberger in person(s). I'll believe that when I tape 'em. But Harrison Ford will be around. And Bo Derek. I may never come back...

Best actor for *Cherry* (1968).
The Deer Hunter (1978). Cliff Robertson was
Walken, another supporting actor winner, for
Oscar. The Godfather Part II (1975). Christopher
Foster won her Oscar for *Shogun* (1980).
Oscar Quiz

Review by Tony Crawley



Deathouse

THE CANNON GROUP INC. Presents
PATRICK O'NEAL JOHN CARRADINE WALTER ABEL
in a film by THEODORE GERSHUNY "DEATHOUSE"
Co-Starring JAMES PATTERSON MARY WORONOW ASTRID HEENEN
Music composed and conducted by GERSHON KINGSLEY
Screenplay by THEODORE GERSHUNY, JEFFREY KONVITZ and IRA TELLER
Based on an original story by JEFFREY KONVITZ and IRA TELLER
Produced by JEFFREY KONVITZ and AMI ARTZI Directed by THEODORE GERSHUNY



Once upon a time there was (still is, actually) a novelist-cum-film producer, name of Jeffrey Konvitz. I met him once. An actress friend introduced us in Cannes some years ago. He wrote *The Sentinel*, said she. I didn't like it, said I. Not my fault, said he. The long and the short of the rest of our conversation appeared to put Michael Winner's talent, (and, according to Konvitz, his parentage) into some grave doubt and suggested that not only would Konvitz never work again with Winner, but that no one—but no one!—would ever mess up his writing like that again. Ever.

So what happened with *Deathouse* then...? For this tame creepy is co-produced by Konvitz, from a script co-written by Konvitz, based on an original (it says here) story also co-concocted by Konvitz. And it is a mess! Whether by clumsy editing or plain rotten writing, the film cheats from start to finish, gaping holes in the scenario are left unplugged, characterisation, motivation, shock, tension not to mention thrills (cheap or otherwise), are all out to lunch. Presumably the same lunch where the whole sorry enterprise was first dreamed up.

Jeffrey Konvitz may well be saying to other journalists he's introduced to by actresses that he's been plain rubbished again. But two out of three losers has a certain consistency to it that tends to suggest otherwise.

At least, he can't blame our Mr Winner this time.

Although Konvitz won't work with Winner again, his distributor, the Cannon Group, have lately signed him for two films: *Death Wish II* and a *Gunga Din* re-make. Never mind, Konvitz has enough other people to pass the buck to. Two fellow scriptwriters...

a co-producer... and an equally unknown director, rejoicing in the name of Theodore Gershuny (who cannot be that far removed from the film's composer, a certain Gershon Kingsley?) All five (six?) men are on a hiding to nothing. They have a germ of a good dark old house shocker here, and there is one well-devised sequence of a madman sticking a champagne glass into another guy's eyes, filmed from the point of view of both the glass and the eye. But all other opportunities to achieve abrasive effects rather than snoring ennui have been heaved out the window.

This appalling waste of potential includes the cast. The top-billed Patrick O'Neal, hardly a box-office draw anyway, is killed off very quickly, along with his tasty mistress, in what one might call a nod to *Psycho*. John Carradine is mute throughout, apart from three words tacked on in post-synching which appear to emanate from his side of a conference table, otherwise he 'speaks' by means of jabbing a hotel receptionist's bell-push, which he winds up at the end of another busy day in his newspaper office. (He'll never get to ring it again).

Walter Abel, Hollywood's original D'Artagnan in the 1936 *Three Musketeers* (six years before Michael York was even born), is pulled out of cold storage at 83, for the first time in my knowledge since a tv movie seven years back. He shows his experience, at least, being the only visitor to the dark old house to bring a gun with him. James Patterson, typecast for so long in villainous roles, is the obvious red-herring in the film, and saddled with trying to jolt us when he plainly doesn't care. Mary Woronow relates and participates in the bleak house tale, looking far more feminine than Roger Corman usually allows

her to be, but try as she might, she's still a long way from Barbara Steele.

Then again, what should one really expect from a movie with a title that can't spell... Plus a scenario which includes the following exchange. *Mary*: How old are you? *Patterson*: You mean... how long have I lived...? (And remember, it took three allegedly mature Hollywood writers to come up with that gem).

Not only is *Deathouse* a mess, it is a s-l-o-w mess. Slow-witted, at that. An unhappy melding of *Don't Answer The Phone From Amityville* on December 24th. (Again!)

The film begins, promisingly enough, with Mary wandering around the grounds of a large spread, as her voice-over intones that nothing remains here now except her memories. These begin with the first of two flashback sequences—with old Wilfred Butler, the owner of Butler House, running out of his front door on December 24, 1956, in a burst of flame. He yells. He screams. And he runs. Instead of rolling the flames out on the snowy ground. He's buried almost immediately, his gravestone up before the hearse arrives. His will leaves the house to his grandson "a monument to man's inhumanity."

Cut to 1981, or thereabouts, as Patrick O'Neal, a sharp city lawyer type, arrives in the tiny East Willard township, which has the crummiest Town Hall on record (the same set is later seen as the police station). On the grandson's orders, O'Neal is to sell the house to the Town Council for \$50,000 instead of the \$250,000 he thinks it's worth. The council is a weird old group: Walter Abel's Mayor, Carradine's publisher of *The Patriot*, the police chief, and Tess "who operates the switchboard; we call her the director of



communications"!

They need a day to get the money together and against all their warnings, O'Neal spends the night in the old house, with his girl, Astrid Herren, looking as tasty as she did in Jewison's *Castle Keep*, way back in 1969. Before long, a black-gloved hand chops them both to liverwurst with an axe.

Oh, did I forget to mention a maniac had fled from the local asylum, he, she or it being played by the camera during an escape to a stolen car, and so he, she or it could be Mary Woronow, who we next see in a car, or James Patterson, passed by Mary on the road, looking very mean alongside a stranded car with a tyre-lever held menacingly in his mitt... I did forget all that? Well, never mind. Not important.

One by one, the town council members are called to a reunion the Butler House by phone by a whispery voice which keeps mentioning Marianne. One by one they go and I do mean go. As in *Exuent*. The sheriff is first, as befits any lawyerman still wearing his sunglasses at night. (Didn't they tell him it was a day for night shot?) Next, is fat Tess. She's terrified of the Butler House. But she bravely enters it. That's when the lights go out and the telephonic voice says, "Here, take my hand." She does. It's cold. She drops it. And it hits the floor... and Tess soon follows.

That's two down, and it's three when the man-on-the-road, who proves to be old Butler's grandson, and Mary Woronow, mow down poor old John Carradine on a dark road. Just as it took them all of 30 seconds to notice that the sheriff's car was empty, it now takes Patterson 40 seconds or more to pronounce Carradine dead—and realise that someone has cut his hands off.

And the cause of all these killings? You may well ask. Mary finds some of the facts when unearthing (all too easily) the 1935 newspapers in Carradine's office. (As the township seems only to comprise the members of the Town Council one wonders why five people *need* a newspaper). Butler's diary is also found and the pieces fall into place in a longer flashback shot in extremely grainy sepia.

Butler has seduced his own daughter—the grandson's mother, if you're still with me. She slipped her moorings as a result. Butler turned his house into an asylum to help tend her. During a Christmas Eve party, he realised the doctors were free-loading quacks, more interested in his money, food and booze. He freed Marianne, and indeed *all* the patients. They proceeded to go on the rampage, killing all the staff, and, by accident, Marianne as well. And, of course, you guessed it hours ago, those ex-inmates are now the residents of East Willard... the mayor, the publisher, the directors of communications and so on.

There is a final shoot-out between the Mayor and the grandson, each one thinking the other is the voice on the phone. Poor Mary doesn't know which corpse to rush to first—the Mayor was her father, you see. But it's not over yet. The real killer is on the stairs. It's old man Butler himself. It wasn't him but a squatter set on fire at the start, and he's been living in another madhouse since and was the escapee played by the camera. Mary grabs one of the guns and that's that. "I spent that night weeping to myself. Next morning, there was no more tears."

Only in the audience! Tears of both anger and laughter when for instance, right in the middle of the mayhem, James Patterson

delivers another immortal line from our three scribes of the year: "What's *wrong*? Tess has forty birdcages in her house. Towlman is hysterical. Everybody is in my house except me. It's cold outside. And you didn't lock the door."

Ironically, before *Deathhouse* was first unveiled during this year's Cannes festival market, we were addressed in the Ambassadors cinema by a charming, mid-aged lady in pink, asking us to buy similarly pink envelopes, in aid of a movie charity, founded by Fernandel, with Alain Delon and Michele Morgan as its Godparents today. The charity was in aid of handicapped filmgoers. She would have had a better response at the end of the film—if she'd changed it to handicapped film-makers.

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again Mr Konvitz. No, on second thoughts, don't—please! ●

Deathhouse

(1981)

Patrick O'Neal (*as the Lawyer*), John Carradine (*Towlman*), Walter Abel (*Mayor*), James Patterson (*Jeffrey Butler*), Mary Woronow (*Diane Adams*), Astrid Herren (*Lawyer's Girl*).

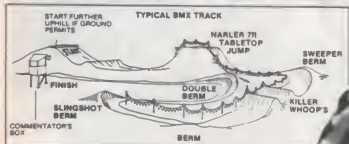
Directed by **Theodore Gershuny**. Screenplay by **Theodore Gershuny, Jeffrey Konvitz, Ira Teller**, from an original story by Konvitz and Teller. Music by **Gershon Kingsley**. Produced by **Jeffrey Konvitz and Ami Artiz**. (No other credits available.)

A Cannon Films Release, reviewed at Les Ambassadeurs cinema, Cannes, courtesy the Cannon Group, Inc.

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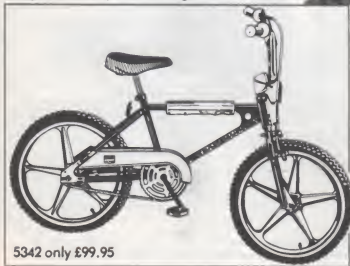
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DAWN OF THE MUMMY

Preview by
Bobby Dupea

Frank Agrama lost... With an obviously slimmer budget, he avoided the Pyramids (done to death in *Vogue* fashion shoots anyway) and has his lensman and models settling for a remote village across the Sahara someplace.

Actually, this village could well have been shot back in the United States for all I know and very likely was—one desert looking much like another. Ferretting around for the ideal setting for his girls, our photographer happens upon the freshly looted tomb of the great Pharaoh, Safiraman. The photo-strobes cook the mummy back to something akin to life, an old curse is reactivated... and well, you know what happens after that.

In keeping with his Romero influences, Agrama is not content with a single Mummy, stalking the desert and township. This Mummy has an whole army of similarly bandaged ghouls wreaking vengeance against the world of the living.

Or to put it another way... eating them! ●

Egyptology has been trying hard to make a comeback just lately. Too hard.

We've had an overly earnest Charlton Heston digging around the old tombs in Mike Newell's *The Awakening*, a tame, indeed timid version of Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars*...

We've had the rather more fetching, if no less unintentionally hysterical, vista of Lesley-Ann Down being chased all over the place in Franklin J. Schaffner's *Sphinx*—most reviews of which tended to rhyme with the title.

Neither one really had any of the power, the sheer gusto of a Hammer number. Chris Lee is still the movies' real grand-Mummy! In fact, very few of the big-star horrors work as well as the (better) small-budget stuff. Big names suffer in such alien genres in much the same way they do in their contemporary movies replete with street-smart swearing. They act embarrassed.

Well, if you're a Mummy fan, fear not. The return of the Mummy syndrome is not yet over. Although, admittedly, it's come very close to being ruined for everyone.

American producer-director Frank Agrama has his smaller-budget version ready and waiting to hit our screens—and, or so he claims, engender our screams. And not, he certainly hopes, of laughter.

Dawn of the Mummy, has as the title suggests, rather more Romero overtones than those of Hammer, Heston or Down. Agrama alone seems to have understood the vital point of this old genre (which dates back to 1932 in Hollywood, by the way). Mummies are the living dead. Egyptian zombies.

And so, Agrama has 'em living, walking, stalking, tottering, killing, with their bandages loose and akimbo, making life rather unpleasant for a trendy fashion photographer and four American models on location in Cairo and its spooky environs.

The cast, like the producer-director—and did I forget to mention, he's one third of the scripting team?—is unknown and includes one name which, no doubt, Goldfarb Distributors is hoping everyone will misread on the posters. George Peck. But by the time most people find out that it's George and not Gregory, they'll be seated inside theatres, watching the film and wondering which threatening bunch of walking band-aids happens to be hiding the star of *The Omen*...

Like the other two films, *Dawn* has some Egyptian locations. It's amazing how no less than three dollar-backed ventures all turned up in Cairo around the same period. They must have been falling all over one another and fighting for the best location sites. Well,



Where in 1985, Orwell's prophecies have not (all) taken place. Not that it's one of the best years on the international front. Oil, detente, the Mid-East conflicts, a renewal of the Vietnam war, border disputes all over—Turkey-Greece, Iran-Iraq, Israel-Syria, China-Russia, Japan-Russia, East and West Germany... The cold war is hotting up. Moscow's new bosses are more extreme than ever. Israel tests her first (?) atomic bomb. A hawkish government takes over Bonn and moves to Berlin. The Soviets warning "the world should not trust Russia's rationality." A German scientist announces on tv that "there can be no talk of any power game without Germany... German science has still not had its last say." And in Tokyo, the Mitsubishi board of directors hear their smiling chairmen announce, "After Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan still owes something to the Western world," and unveils the latest Mitsubishi product. Karate robots.

"Unbeatable—not even by one another."

Suddenly, all the newspapers in the world have exactly the same headline. **MAN FROM THE FUTURE VISITS PRESENT—INSISTS ON APPEARING BEFORE UNITED NATIONS.**

No journalist has written that story. No editor has passed it. No typesetter has set it. No printer printed it. It has just... happened. Evolved out of the ether. By itself...

"Dictated," explains the news story, "by an advanced electro-telepathic technological process to all newspapers in the world by the visitor from the future," in order to announce a global telecast.

And sure enough, television shows are wiped out simultaneously around the globe—and a lone, male figure in a golden suit appears on all screens, coast to coast, country to country.

He's of Caucasian appearance, but of indeterminate origin and has what appears to be some kind of plastic (crystal?) headgear, rather like a reversed set of triangular shaped earphones. He delivers a message, though his lips never move. Yet his words are heard distinctly in each land and in every tongue.

What is all this? Some updated Orson Welles *War of the Worlds* scene on an international scale?

He is, he says, or at least communicates, *Futura Man*. He calls himself FM. He's from the 31st Century. The year 3005, to be precise. He's arrived in the present (or rather 1985, remember) by TTM—his time-treavelling machine... which explains a whole bunch of "natural" catastrophes, not to mention certain para-psychological psychosias in his craft's wake.

He talks with, as the script has it, "the enthusiasm of a salesmen, promising a revolution in communication and art." Then, like every good salesmen, he gets to the nitty-gritty. In the names of his principals he has a message for UNO...

And this he delivers in private to the Security Council. The message is simplistic enough, if sounding contradictory and a trifle Strangelovian in its terms. Namely, advance the inevitable World War II (not only inevitable, but an historical fact to FM). And for why? 'For,' says FM, 'a better future.'

Such is the basis, or part of it, of **Message From the Future**—Israel's first science-fiction endeavour. And if that statement sounds a joke, another contradiction in terms, forget it. This is a classic movie, the kind that the Israeli industry, still largely unknown to Britain is well capable of. It's written and directed by an internationally regarded Israeli poet, artist (in plastics) and film (and tv) maker, David Avidan. It's co-produced by Avidan's Thirtieth Century Films and the

Exclusive Report by Tony Crawley

Message from the Future





combine of perhaps the best young producer in Israel today, Jacob Kotzky.

"Yes, it is Israel's first sf film," says David Avidan. "More than that, it is the Middle East's... perhaps Asia's first film and most certainly the first independent sf film produced anywhere without backing from Hollywood or any major film companies in the world."

That could explain the budget—a mere \$500,000, raised from various Israeli companies. George Lucas probably spends that much on *feeding* his Industrial Light and Magic special effects in a fortnight! "All the special effects and the art department's gimmicks were carried out in Israel," adds Avidan. "We were interested in forging a new concept of sf movie-making, based on brilliant ideas and sophisticated solutions rather than on a pompous art department."

These effects, while not Lucian or even Trumbullian, are good. They include a city in some far future (well, 3005 AD to be precise, of course). This was shot in the Weizman Institute's laser laboratory.

Producer Jacob Kotzky also supervised Avidan's large art team, which, naturally, also designed FM's TTM.

Indeed, given the full and impressive range of this film—from multi-national casting (not that difficult to accomplish in Israel, on supposes) to a variety of "internationally made" shots in London, New York, Peking, Paris, Tokyo, Berlin in additions to the main footage lensed in Tel Aviv, Avidan's achievement with such a miniscule budget is little short of amazing. Not to say, highly elastic. He even recorded the score in London, and if he couldn't afford certain characters, he simply found lookalikes for them—for Margaret Thatcher and Isaac Asimov, for example. He has produced not the traditional quart, but a couple of gallons, from his pint pot.

The movie is shot (with an eye to international sales as well) mainly in English, though certain of the melting-pot casts of Americans, British, Dutch, Russian, Polish, Chinese, Japanese and naturally Israeli actors) also use their own languages. Including, in the case of lovely Irit Meiri and the stunning superstructure of Marie Gassman, body language!

It is, at times, a wordy dialogue they all speak, but no more so really, than, say, *Dark Star*. Avidan has a number of messages he wants to get off his chest, not all new, but always well worth expressing anew. These range from reminding us that Einstein's time-travel theories are correct to the future being just around the corner.

And so to the Future Man's big meet with the Security Council. It's a brief telepathic speech and it knocks 'em cold.

"He tells them," explains Avidan, "that not only are their attempts to postpone World War III ineffectual, they are also harmful... from an historical viewpoint. Therefore, it's better that the war breaks out at the right time—he is prepared to reveal the date to all sides concerned once they agree. The war, in FM's—or his principal's opinion—will achieve global peace much more than dragging out the present situation. For his part, FM guarantees that war won't cause total annihilation of mankind. 'Please try to discondition yourselves of all superstitious fears about radioactivity. You can see for yourselves that the future exists'... meaning that it survives all atomic wars and there were more than one!"

While continuing on this 'better future' tack Future Man's speech also swerves into something of an instant class in telepathy for the UNO high-up, before he stops his lecture and gives the Security Council 24 hours to ►

come to a decision... about going to war with on another.

Meanwhile, as they say, a young Israeli scientist—an ex-Harvard graduate working at Tel Aviv's Brainpower Centre on what he terms meta-futurology—decides to challenge the man from the future. And his message: "It's designed to mislead mankind, not help it." According to the doc's calculations, advancing the war will help not the world, but certain galactic interests in the present... or the future.

The two men, Future Man and futurologist confront each other at the next UNO session. The aggressive scientist (Avi Yarkir) is freed in position by FM (Dutch actor Joseph Bee). Not that FM really disputes the doctor's anti-thesis... He also offers an innovative definition of time: "The paradox of time—understanding is that one needs much more time than one has in order to grasp time as a concept," telepaths FM. "The amount of time needed to know what time is, is considerably higher than the entire time-storage in the universe."

Ah so! He then throws in a counter-challenge. He invites the futurologist in the future for a few days... This is the prelude to a climax with a wonderful sting in David Avidan's tale...

When it does, I expect to see Avidan reserving his berth with Lucas, Spielberg and the rest, for the premiere flights. His company, remember, is Thirtieth Century Films, just one of the futuristically labelled subsidiaries of the equally grand sounding major company—David Avidan—The Thirtieth Century Ltd—which runs all of this tomorrow man's multi-media (print, records, studios, galleries, theatre) activities. They also include acting, by the way. Avidan appears as FM's Superior in the film, and gives permission at one point for Future Man to reduplicate himself into seven clones...

David remains in the Thirtieth Century, or somewhere close, for his next movie. "I'm preparing," he tells me, "a futuristic version of *Hamlet*." To beam up, or not to beam up, that is the question...



Message from the Future (1981)

Joseph Bee (as FM), Avi Yarkir (Dr Ziv), Irit Meiry (Sheily), Kichi Sasayama (Nabeshima), David Avidan (FM's Superior), Leonard Graves (Anderson), Jeff Hyman (Jack), Gershon von Schwartze (Dr Konrad Krantz), Grisha Borodo (Soviet Chief of Staff), Wen-Chao Lai (Chinese Chairman), Zygmunt Frankel (Polish Chairman), Rafi Tailor (Dr Krant's Make-up), Savely Grinberg (Russian UNO delegate), Nina Voronel (Russian translator), Aviva Marks (BBC interviewer), Grace Goldston-Davies, Walter Flesch (NBC-TV news presenters), Pam Barden (Margaret Thatcher), Richard Salano (Black guru), Mattie Gasman (Bathub girl), Michel Eckhard, Avraham Petta (French Scientists), Moshe Timor, Michael Greenspan (Israeli TV announcers, Hebrew and English), Koji Ezawa (Japanese TV announcer), Rony Kluger, Yossi Kable, Edy Zubkov (Karate Robots), and Norman Ravis (as Isaac Asimov).

Written and directed by David Avidan.

Photographed by Amnon Solomon, Edited by Ludmila Gollat, Music by Jan Pulsford, Tom Blades with their Janus group, Make-up by Zivik Yarkir, Sound by Jacob Goldstein, Wardrobe by Lisa Harel, with Judy Jano, Art supervisors Jacob Kotzky, TTM and sf designer, Kuly Sander, TTM Finish supervisor, Itamar Newman, Special electronic effects, Avi Fishbain, Special effects by Butch Lee, Produced by (and art supervision) by Jacob Kotzky.

An MMF Production for Thirtieth Century Films (Tel Aviv).

Above: Director David Avidan, camera assistant Joseph Zicherman and cinematographer Amnon Solomon shooting at the Weizman Institute's laser laboratory. Above: Telepathic communication using Time-Future's special TAMPS (Telepathic Amplifiers, the head device) in conjunction with the breastplate/neck computer. Below: Superfast karate robots in action.







After a while working as a Visual Effects Hand, Francis wanted a change. So he got an "attachment" as a Visual Effects Assistant: the BBC's attachment scheme allows staff to get temporary on-the-job training and gain experience which benefits them for future internal job applications. Francis was on

attachment as an Assistant for about nine months, then went back to his job in the stores and eventually, when a vacancy came up, he was made a full Visual Effects Assistant.

He assisted designer John Horton on various shows, including *The Secret Army*

and *Doctor Who*. Then he was scheduled to assist designer Steve Drewett on the third series of *Blake's 7*. The BBC had originally planned to have two fully-fledged designers on the series, but the Visual Effects Department was fully-stretched at the time, so Francis was made an "acting" Designer ▶

Above: An explosion rocks the cinema room on Megarthea after Zaphod and his friends have their close encounter with two intergalactic cats.



Above: Jim Francis tests his robotic creation — the mechanical head of Zaphod Beeblebrox as used in *Hitch Hikers Guide to the Galaxy*.

to go for the best available stuff we could do." Francis credits most of the success of the television series to Bell: "He was a perfectionist. He just went to get it right and wanted everything even though it meant a lot more work. I certainly don't mind doing it if it improves the end result and in the end, I think, it *did* show. There was a lot of time and effort put into it."

But, in television, time and effort mean money and that is something of which the BBC has little because of its low Licence Fee. When the Corporation saw the bill for the first episode of *Hitch-Hiker*, they almost cancelled the show then-and-there: "There was a time," says Francis, "when I thought they wouldn't go on with it. There was a tense period of about a month. I kept phoning up and saying 'Any news yet?' and the answer was always 'No, we haven't heard.' Then, all of a sudden, they'd agreed to everything, which was great. They just suddenly said Go ahead and do it!"

Francis and his team managed to save money along the way, without harming production standards. One brief scene early in the series showed heroes Arthur Dent and Ford Prefect inside the vast expanse of the Vogan spaceship. This was a 'glass shot'. That technical term normally means that the camera shoots through a sheet of glass. There is a painting on the surface of the glass, matched up with the live-action scene which can be viewed through the clear parts of the glass. On screen, it looks like a single scene. That is the traditional way to do it, but that is now how the *Hitch-Hiker* scene was shot.

"With a glass shot," explains Francis, "You've got to tie a camera up practically all day while the matte artist joins the two (the glass painting and real scene) together. You carry on doing your recording and this guy's painting away matching it all together. That's

great and it has worked for a long time. But what evolved from *Hitch-Hiker* was another way of doing it. You do it the other way round. You film the scene and then electronically make a glass shot out of it. You record your scene, then the artist takes a photograph of the taped version and goes away and does his painting separately. The painting is then recorded on tape too and you can combine it with the live-action you've shot. It saves having the camera tied up all day and it makes life a lot easier."

That is one of the successes of the *Hitch-Hiker* tv series. On the debit side, one of the worst effects is Zaphod Beeblebrox's second head. It looks exactly what it is: a radio-controlled device perched precariously on the actor's shoulder. It looks wrong partly because of its positioning in relation to the actor's real head and trunk. But it also looks unconvincing in itself. This is very odd. I have seen the head demonstrated in isolation and it is a remarkably subtle piece of work: it can move its head in any direction, move its eyes independently and even snarl or smile with a movement of the cheek beside the lips. So why, I asked Francis, did it look so unconvincing on screen?

"Well," he says, "I think it was partly our fault inasmuch as I think we should have kept it moving a lot more, even when it wasn't supposed to be doing anything. It should have been looking around and we should have persuaded them to give it a few more lines because, when it spoke, it actually came to life."

Time was also a factor. The head was finished only the day before location filming began and there was just not time to perfect it. On the upcoming second *Hitch-Hiker* series, Francis hopes to perfect the head and over-emphasise all the movements so that they will appear more realistic. "At least it will

be moving all the time," he says: "It will be doing something even if it's only twitching its mouth; we'll improve the twitching." He also hopes to install a mini-computer module in the head, similar to the one used to animate the ceiling-mounted computer in the new *Blake's 7* series. This module will be programmed to carry out sequences of eye and head movements at the press of a button.

Surprisingly, though, the radio-controlled head was not the effect which gave Francis the biggest headache on the first *Hitch-Hiker* series. It was Marvin, The Paranoid Android.

"He was a man in a suit, of course," says Francis. "But to put a man inside a suit is not as easy as it seems. I didn't want a suit with rubber joints, because it might have ended up looking a bit like C3PO in *Star Wars*. No matter what shape it was, the fact that it was jointed at the elbows and knees would have meant it just walked like a human being. So what I decided to do was to try and get mechanical joints and it wasn't as easy as I thought to get a man's arm to go through. The final joint, in fact, was a sort of sliding shutter with a gap underneath. It's not easy to make a human arm to do a mechanical movement inside a box. That was the problem. And, on top of that, we had the problem of the actual character design, which had to be agreed by the producer and writer. We didn't know whether he should look permanently depressed or if he should be programmed to be depressed but look normal on the outside. In the end, we went through about nine or ten different designs."

The same evolution of designs happened on the new *Blake's 7* series. The main Scorpion spacecraft, according to Francis, "was originally supposed to be a sort of transporter that went round ripping other ships to pieces. Then, as scripts and ideas started evolving, instead of just lumbering through space as a

transporter, it sometimes had to become a fast flying machine. So we had to re-design it and make it more streamlined so it looked as if it could fly fast. I know it doesn't have to be streamlined to fly fast in space, but they re-enter atmospheres, so we had to make it streamlined because of the re-entry. It just kept changing and changing until eventually we came up with a shape that looked good on screen."

On the new *Blake*, Francis co-designed with Andy Lazell. But how do two designers work together on a show? "What Andy and I tended to do," Francis explains, "was go off and do a drawing each. Then we'd get together and say 'Oh, yours is better than mine'. Then we'd sit down and change bits and pieces and we'd show it to Vere (Lorrimer, the producer) and he'd change bits and eventually the final drawing would evolve. That's actually not a bad way of designing because, if just one person did it, he might overlook some points that somebody else would pick up."

In the new *Blake* series, Francis was also able to build on experience gained during *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to The Galaxy*. The model effects work on that was extremely complex and he theoretically had two choices: either pay for expensive and time-consuming optical work in outside film laboratories or use existing BBC equipment. In fact, financial pressure dictated the latter. That meant shooting scenes against blue and then electronically putting in a new background (a process explained by A.J. Mitchell in *Starburst 30*). On the first two *Hitch-Hiker* episodes, all the blue effects were shot on film then electronically combined with the other optical elements. From the third episode onwards, some of the blue work was shot by electronic cameras straight onto videotape, rather than being filmed. Says Francis: "It stood out like a sore thumb to me. Video's much harsher and the electronic equipment's just not ready yet for the things we want to do. I prefer the lighting on film and the look of film."

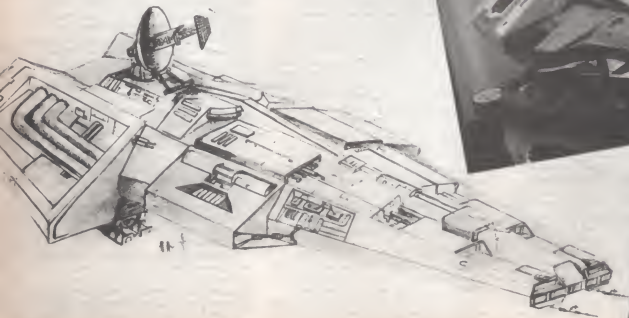
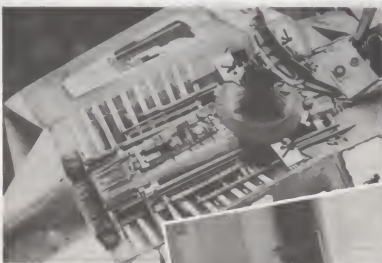
For that reason, the blue screen effects work on the new *Blake's 7* was shot on film at the BBC's visual effects base in Acton or at the BBC's film studios in Ealing. The film was then taken to Television Centre in Shepherd's Bush. If, say, the scene had to show a ship travelling through space, then two rolls of film were shot: one of the ship against blue

and one of the stars. The two rolls of film were then put on two telecine machines and, by using the electronic vision-mixing unit in the *Blake* studio's production gallery, the two pictures were combined, with the starry sky replacing the blue background. The result was recorded onto videotape, to be edited into the rest of the programme at a later date. "It's exactly the same process they do optically in the film labs," says Francis, "but we do it electronically."

This method of shooting the two separate elements on two separate films and then combining them electronically also saves

money. Francis can use a single shot of a ship several times without anyone noticing. He can film the ship, say, travelling left to right across the screen then electronically combine this one shot with any number of other different film backgrounds to create any number of totally different final composite pictures.

At the start of the new *Blake's 7* series, Francis and co-designer Lazell built up a collection of 'stock-shots' of the main Scorpio craft. They filmed it travelling left-right/ right-left/ towards the camera/ away from the camera, etc. And they commissioned





various animated star backgrounds—static or moving towards the camera/ away from the camera/ left-right etc. By combining various stock-shots together or by adding in a new background planet, totally different pictures emerge. It's like Action Man with pictures.

All this is complicated enough, but there is another complication. In the past, various BBC effects designers have told me it's

difficult to shoot model effects if the BBC cameraman scheduled to shoot the scenes has no interest in working on effects. He may have no feel for this very specialised field; he's just on the rota to do it. What does Francis think about this situation? "Well," he says, "you get whatever camera team's scheduled. I've always been lucky. On the new *Blake*, we've got two of the best cameramen. One of them (Mike Southern) shot that recent *Arena* programme on the Chelsea Hotel in New York: a superb bit of film and he really is one of the best cameramen I've ever come across. Some of his ideas were terrific and we've got some really nice sequences out of it, like the platform."

When the *Blake* crew land on their home base, a large platform carries the Scorpio craft down into the depths of the planet. "We built a 12ft model of the big cavern," says Francis. "And then we did several separate

shots of the shaft itself, which was about 12ft long. We shot the Scorpio going down the shaft all filled with smoke and light beams and we kept it all very low-key to try and make it a lot more real."

One reason why the landing-pad, cavern and shaft were built so big was because the Scorpio itself had to be a certain size to allow realistic detailing on the model. "The big spacecraft is 4ft long," explains Francis, "we also had a 16 inch and a 5 inch version for various other sequences. But I wanted to use the big one for the landing because of the extra detail. That meant the model landscape had to be that big. And it also gave it tremendous scale, so we could detail it more. It was a big plus on the lighting side; it meant we could get some nice lighting."

"I suppose I prefer fantasy programmes. Most people ask me 'Why do you like doing space programmes?'—they always call them space programmes. But, if you take *Blake* and *Hitch-Hiker*, they cover more aspects of the job than almost any other show. You've got everything from pyrotechnics—really big explosions—to the sort of trick props which you get on normal light entertainment shows. You're covering everything. In one of the new *Blake* episodes, the script asked for a sort of snake monster which rears up and is shot. It was all pneumatic. It's all air rams. The thing rears up and the mouth opens and closes, dripping with a mixture of glycerine and cotton wool-type material. Then the head's blown off. That was great. What we do is really all down to the scripts. But, if there's a new challenge, we'll deal with it."

Left: A selection of views of the *Blake*'s 7 ship, *Scorpio*, in various stages of construction. At extreme left is Jim Francis' original design concept for the craft. Above: The original design drawing plus photos of the finished model of the snake creature from the first episode of the new season of *Blake*'s 7.



VIDEO SCENE

by Peter
Cargin



Reeding in *Starburst 37* of the BBC's version of *The Day of the Triffids* coming up, I thought I'd better establish from the esteemed Editor what else might be on the horizon along the same lines, as I suggested that I could perhaps tie-in my video spot to the theme of the issue. I also had in the back of my mind the alliterative title for the piece, *Vegetables On Video!* However I'm afraid that the number of movies involving the vegetable race is pretty limited—I mentioned the hilarious *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* last time and giant mushrooms, carrots, etc., don't yet figura. Of course the 1963 film version of John Wyndham's classic is on video, from IPC of all people; *Day of the Triffids* paired up the unlikely duo of Howard Keel and Janette Scott as the leads in Steve Sekely's pallid attempt to bring the story to the screen, despite Wally Vevers on special effects and Philip Yordan on the script (this was at the time when he was in the midst of his great epic screenplays for *El Cid*, *55 Days at Peking* and *Fall of the Roman Empire* and thus heridly seems an ideal choice for such a subject).

One of the other classics involving vegetables, at least initially, was of course *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, now in two versions and I don't think it will be too long before at least one becomes available on video.

The sad fact is that despite the number of vegetarian restaurants about, we are by nature a bloodthirsty and meat eating lot. The spate of nasty movies on video continues with two Italian editions to the range of those dealing with the flesh eaters—*Cannibal Terror* (Mountain Films) has for its tag line, "a story of fiends who eat human flesh" although I note it has a couple of ladies among its cast more notable for exposing their flesh than eating it, namely Silvia Solar and Pamela Stanford; *Cannibal* (Darran) is directed by one Reggiero Deodato! according to the video label and is said to be based on a true experience—in fact my research shows that it is indeed an Italian film, but directed by Ruggero Deodato (who also has made Westerns under the name Roger Rockfeller!) and was shown in America under the title *The Last Survivor*. It's apparently a jolly tale of cannibalism and cruelty to animals, more I cannot say until I get to see it.

Other classes who seem to have an insatiable desire for the human flesh are our old friends the zombies, did George Romero know what he was letting himself in for? The latest title to use the evocative word is something called *Zombies Lake*

(Mountain Films) and here the zombies are apparently German soldiers killed in the second world war who inhabit the lake and take bits out of anyone foolish enough to go into it—I've heard those stories of the Japanese soldiers hiding out in the jungle not knowing the war was over, but this is ridiculous!

There should not be any need for me to tell you that *Flesh Gordon* was neither a film concerned with horror, not with recapturing the spirit of the original serials. However for those of you who don't mind perodies with a good deal of sex, *Flesh* is on video from VPD.

The recent death of film distributor Jimmy Vaughan sadly almost coincides with the appearance on video of what are termed Andy Warhol's *Frankenstein*, and *Dracula*, from new distributors Selig. In fact *Flesh For Frankenstein* and *Blood for Dracula*, as they were originally known in the cinema, were actually shown in 3D, having been shot in something called Spacevision. They were both something of travesties.

Now continuing in the same vein there are those in the cinema at least who don't actually want the flesh but find the blood quite sufficient to keep them alive and well. A new distributor again, Home Video, have a quite nice black humour story from the continent, *Blood Relations*, where the local vampire is conveniently also the local hospital doctor and thus has easy access to blood. The cosy scheme for him and his fellow vampires almost breaks down when a nice new nurse discovers the coven, but in a nice twist ending they save her from a fate worse than death. Werewolves are another species who find that a bit of the old human keeps them healthy and end up to the mark for another month and Intercity Video have recently given us *Werewolf Women* (reviewed in *Starburst 34*), yet another Italian film.

If you were thinking about two other recent titles, namely *Mark of the Devil* (Intervention) or *Human Experiments* (World of Video 2000) let me say that I'd give them qualified approval. *Mark of the Devil* is a German-financed movie directed by Michael Armstrong about the witchfinders in England, which is distinguished, if that's the word by some very nasty and explicit torture scenes on the one hand but also by a rather good performance by Herbert Lom as the impotent and self-doubting chief witchfinder. *Human Experiments* sounds as though it's a rather nasty piece of work, but in fact the experiments are rather of a psychological nature than the tongue extracting in *Mark of the Devil*. *Human Experiments* concerns

itself with a young girl singer, Linde Haynes, who is wrongly convicted of murder and sent to prison to end up in the clutches of nutty psychiatrist Geoffrey Lewis (the same Lewis we now know as Clint Eastwood's sidekick). He tries to get her to regress to childhood by some unpleasant methods before she is finally saved. The film incidentally has cameo appearances from Aldo Ray and Jackie Coogan and Ellen Travolta plays a helpful inmate.

Finally, we have a couple of new ones from VIPCO, *Beyond Evil* and *Nightkill*, the first with Linde Day George and John Saxon undergoing all the problems you get when you move into a house possessed by the devil and in the second none other than Jaclyn (Charlie's Angel) Smith as the heroine caught up in a plot to get rid of her husband and swindles his company out of a lot of money. Robert Mitchum plays a detective who is not all he seems (sounds a bit like *Double Indemnity* to me)—I hope to report more fully when I've seen the videos.

A recent cinema release has quickly found its way onto video, namely *The Monster Club* with Vincent Price and John Carradine; there's also something for the younger ones with two more Gerry Anderson "supermarionations" from Precision Video, *The Incredible Voyage of Stingray* and *Invasion U.F.O.*

Last time I talked about the animated version of the famous fantasy tale, *Baron Munchausen*, now comes news that EMI have the excellent German version, made in the forties with Hens Albers, among their latest releases.

Starburst crosses the world, so I find from a few letters that have come to me. Well at least it gets to Germany and Argentina! Readers abroad should note that everything I mention here is of course only available in PAL—VHS, Beta and sometimes Video 2000 formats. If you live in Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Belgium, Brunei, Canary Islands, China, Denmark, Eire, Finland, West Germany, Ghana, Gibraltar, Greece, Hong Kong, Iceland, Indonesia, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Liberia, Libya, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Portugal, Qatar, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzerland, Tanzania, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Egypt, Yugoslavia, or Zambia you should be able to play pre-recorded tapes from this country (it should also be alright to swap off-air tapes as well).



This autumn, BBC Enterprises will launch its first home video cassettes, in co-operation with 3M, makers of Scotch recording tape. The first twenty titles will include such delights as *Great Railway Journeys of the World*, *Training Dogs the Woodhouse Way* and *The Queen's Birthday Parade*. However, when agreements with actors, writers, musicians, etc., are successfully negotiated, the Corporation will start to release drama productions such as *Doctor Who*, *Blake's 7* and *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy*.

One potential source of friction with fans is the BBC's newly-created Programme Adaptation Department which, in consultation with the original programme's producer, will re-edit productions to cut out 'unnecessary' sections and change the pace

of programmes to suit video cassette viewing. (Sharp-eyed fans may have noticed slight re-edits in the re-runs of *The Hitch-Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy* on BBC-1, and, presumably, a video cassette version would have even more alterations.)

The BBC's new marketing company for home video cassettes—imaginatively called BBC Video—is also discussing the possibility of releasing product on Philips videodiscs, which would be used to carry teletext as well as moving pictures. The British television signal is broadcast at 25 frames per second, so the freeze-frame facility on videodisc would mean that a simple 60-minute disc could carry 90,000 'pages' of Ceefax-style information or still pictures. As a result, BBC publications such as *Life on Earth* or a *History of Doctor Who* or a real *Hitch-Hiker's Guide to*

the *Galaxy* could be sold in disc (rather than book) form, with still pictures and text encoded on individual frames of the picture. Indeed, BBC Enterprises is already calling its new products 'video books'.

Another possibility would be issuing discs which mixed moving pictures and individual still frames. Shakespeare videodiscs could carry both the text of the play and the live-action play itself. In the film world, a disc could carry both the feature film and a 'book' on the making of the film.

Equally, *Starburst* could eventually become a monthly videodisc with text, film-clips and visually-recorded interviews. But would anyone pay to see John Brosnan assault Richard Donner and, with an extra 89,936 pages to design, would Rahid Khan's current green hair turn grey?

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No north Londoner is surprised at anything he sees on Hampstead Heath. Sightings can range from John LeCarre walking his dog to an unseasonal flasher, exposed extremities blue with cold, loping by in the twilight, pursued by a posse of enraged feminists. But even I was shaken by the sight that confronted me as I drove up East Heath Road on a wet spring day earlier this year and turned into a tiny lane overlooking all that rural greenery.

The thing stood under a large elm in the gardens of a suburban villa. Eight foot tall, its neck rose out of a knotted bole like some pollarded oak and, bulging with purple veins, climbed with serpentine menace to a flaring blossom which resembled from the side a set of gaping jaws, but from head on a portion of

female anatomy hardly mentionable in this family magazine.

It was my first look at one of the Triffids created by special effects man Steve Drewett for the BBC tv serial that premiered last month. During the rest of the day's shooting, I was to see half a dozen of these monsters—some complete, and fitted out with cubby holes for their operators, others in various stages of disassembly, allowing them to be spiked with garden forks or blown apart by the "Triffid Gun", another Drewett creation that, as required by John Wyndham's original novel, fires metal discs or boomerangs to slice through the attacking plants.

They were grisly in whatever form one looked at them—perhaps never more so than when a grip jabbed his garden fork again and

again through the neck, revealing fibrous green "muscles", and director Ken Hannam judiciously poured on pints of green ichor to enhance the effect. But they came into their own when the operator climbed inside and the Triffid actually started to move, lumbering in pursuit of the show's stars, John Duttine and Emma Relph, with a sinister hulking motion that was particularly threatening. They are not the kind of tv monster that one will forget in a hurry.

John Fleming (in *Starburst 37*) has already given the background to this new series, describing the circumstances in which ex-*Blake's 7* producer David Maloney spent three years getting it off the ground, and how it is being co-produced by the BBC, the Australian Broadcasting Commission and the

Above: John Duttine plays the hero of *Day of the Triffids*, the ex-Triffid farmer Bill Masen. Above right: The crew, on location, prepare to film a close-up of one of Steve Drewett's Triffids. Far right: A scene from the first episode of the series. Bill Masen is in hospital recovering after a Triffid sting across the eyes. Below right: Bill Masen leads a group of blind people to safety.



the making of bbc's DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS by john baxter

RC TV network in the USA, where the BBC's six 26-minute episodes will be condensed into three 50-minute segments. Clearly, all the effort on Maloney's part has been worth it. From the rushes I saw at Ealing studios a few days after my location visit, it's obvious that Ken Hannam's direction of the Douglas Livingstone adaptation will set a new benchmark for British science fiction on tv.

It's surprising that Wyndham's book has not been put out on video before; the novel, a BBC Radio perennial, has been read on everything from *Schools' Broadcasts* to *Woman's Hour*, and dramatised at least once, by John Powell in 1968. And who can forget Steve Sekely's 1963 movie starring Howard Keel, Nicole Maurey and Janette Scott—a gem for which the word "travesty" might well

have been invented? In Philip Yordan's script, Keel played a Canadian sea captain stranded in London, and the need to exploit an ageing Nicole Maurey led them to shift the whole setting to France for the film's second half. The Triffids—or, to be more correct, the men lumbering about in Triffid suits—were some distance from Wyndham's original conception, and except for some effective scenes of green flashes in the sky awakening rustling monsters in the giant greenhouses at Kew, the film is eminently forgettable.

That Wyndham's most famous novel has received such pulp-magazine treatment is ironic, because he wrote it as a way of escaping from his career as a pulp novelist. After some unnerving experiences as part of a Signals unit attached to the Normandy

invasion force, Wyndham returned to England determined to put his bad old days as a magazine hack behind him. Most of his early work had been written under his real name, John Beynon Harris, or the slightly shortened John Beynon. But feeling that stories like *Spheres of Hell* and *The Third Vibrator* had "disgraced" these, he sorted through his collection of Christian names and adopted a new one, John Wyndham, for his first post-war book.

Wyndham was, above all, a fan of H.G. Wells; he wanted to write as Wells had written, in a calm, undramatic style, and to set his stories in the domestic middle-class world of *War of the Worlds* and *The Sleeper Wakes*. Wyndham lived in Hampshire for a large part of his life, and the rural world gave him his ►



inspiration for *Triffids*. Walking home late one night, he noticed some raspberry canes waving against the sky. Watching the spiked branches he said to his wife, "You know, if those things would walk and think, they'd be very dangerous." He combed horticultural dictionaries for a name for his walking, thinking plants, and finally decided on "triffid" visualising them as lumbering along on a tripod of legs, rocking from one to the other like a man with a walking stick. The name stuck, but the idea is hard to duplicate on screen; Drewett's Triffids slide forward in a hulking lurch, controlled by operators sitting with their backs towards the direction of movement, pushing the whole creation along on the seat of their pants. The sadophallic "clackers" at the base of the Triffid neck—the monsters' means of

communication—are operated electronically from outside.

The long whip-like sting was a major problem for the BBC team. Wyndham never made it clear quite how they fed on human flesh, and since it seemed unlikely that the plant could wait around for a week while a corpse rotted enough to be absorbable, the new version has the Triffids lashing out with a tube-like tentacle at the end of which an obscene-looking sucker allows them to inject their poison and feed off their victims. The effect is gruesomely suggestive. Wyndham might not have approved; he was abstemious, even moralistic in many ways. He is unlikely, however, to have disagreed with Douglas Livingstone's script, which sticks close to the original. Bill Masen, played by Duttine, is, as in the book, a young Triffid

farmer, blinded by a sting and waiting, eyes bandaged, in hospital as the story opens, though Josella, his eventual girlfriend, is played by Emma Relph as an average young woman, not the fashionable society authoress of something called *Sex Is My Adventure* which Wyndham makes her (A slightly censorious response to the fifties' rash of precocious confessional novels).

Aside from this departure, the script sticks closely to the book. Britain, like the rest of the world, is blinded by strange flashes from the sky, creating a world of stumbling victims in which the Triffids can thrive. Sighted survivors like Bill and Josella flee from the cities, which are being turned into armed

text continued on page 35 ►



Above: Josella Payton (Emma Relph) finds the body of her Filipino maid, Anna. Opposite top: Bill Masen (John Duttine) helps Josella to her feet after she discovers the body of Anna. Opposite centre: Bill Masen and Josella Payton. Opposite below: The maid, Anna, killed by a Triffid sting. Opposite: Two Triffids stand in an English garden.



When the BBC eventually decided to go ahead with their much-delayed production of **Day of the Triffids**, he was the one who had to design the title creatures and make them work. Like most people, he had read and liked the John Wyndham novel while he was at school; he had also worked with producer David Maloney on the third **Blake's 7** series. So he was a natural choice. But one problem facing anyone embarking on any **Day of the Triffids** project is the 1963 feature film: it was terribly tatty (see feature in **Starburst 38**).

"In our version, there's nothing really to show the enormous devastation there would be if the world suddenly ground to a halt: there are no aeroplanes falling out of the sky or anything like that—which, I suppose, would have been nice to have done. I suppose, when I first saw the script, I thought there wasn't enough in it (as far as effects were concerned) and that we could do a lot more. There aren't any scenes with millions of triffids in. There was the triffid farm scene: that was a model with miniature triffids. But you don't see much of those, just a bit in the first episode."

"Well, there was no specific description in the script," he says, "so I took the description from the book, getting details section by section. One bit says it's eight foot high; another says it has a long stem; another says it has a woody bowl. So I drew all this out bit by bit and gradually worked out the over-all shape. I also looked at a lot of carnivorous plants for reference and there was one specific plant I used as a main reference for the flower: it's a type of pitcher plant. I based it on that particular one because it's carnivorous and, at the same time, it's very attractive."



Top left: A triffid sits sedately in an... looking harmless enough. Top centre: Triffids surrounds one of Steve Drewett... filming for the BBC tv series. Top right: head of the triffid. Above: Another c... with its nasty stinger exposed ready to... thrower will make very short work of... Steve Drewett's original design sketched... length of the stinger fully extended.



A STARBURST INTERVIEW BY JOHN FLEMING STEVE DREWETT



English country garden, the crew of *Day of the Triffids* whilst on location. A close-up of the deadly flame-up, this time in profile. A triffid strike. Below: A flame triffid, stinger or not! Left: the triffids. Note the



"The impression I got from the book was that a triffid wasn't an ugly, aggressive-looking thing at all. In fact, it was the total opposite: a rather beautiful plant that wouldn't frighten anybody who saw it. People would be rather attracted to it which, in a way, is the essence of its danger. It looks so nice, but it's got this lethal sting that whips out and slashes you."

Actually building the creature and making it move, however, is another matter entirely: "I thought about how it could be done mechanically," says Drewett. "But the problem with that is that it's very difficult to get a nice fluid movement. Also, you never know what circumstances you're going to be presented with out on location. If it's mechanical, you might be asked to make it move over a piece of ground that turns out to be impossible. So I figured the best way to get all the compound movements I had to get was to have a man inside it. That way, we just had to tell the chap what to do. We had radio control and the triffids were also air-conditioned because it was very hot inside. The top of the triffid was open and, in the neck, we had a little fan which brought in cool air and blew it down onto the operator."

"The whole thing was self-supporting. The neck was made of fibreglass and continued down into the base, where it was joined onto a go-kart seat—just the seat—which was flat on the ground. The whole thing supported itself so that, when the operator climbed in, there was no weight at all because it was all directed at the ground. All the operator had to do was move around. The bottom part's about five foot long. It's shaped the way it is partly, of course, so you're able to fit the person inside. But I also used a ginseng root as a reference when I drew it—because it's knobbly—and then I added twiddly bits to make it look more rooty. It's basically made of latex covered in sawdust and sisal string with some bits of real roots stuck on. As I say, it's about five foot long and, when you see it in operation, you wonder how on earth somebody could get inside it—hopefully."

"Designing anything's obviously partly a matter of trial and error: like the top of the stem. We did a prototype which was just fibreglass and it didn't look as nice; it obviously needed some sort of movement. So we changed the top and made it of rubber so it's floppy."

"Over-all though, there are very few effects, really. We made one triffid gun which was designed to look as though it could work. We did the flamethrowers. There's some rain which nobody'll notice, of course—all the sequences towards the end of the story. But not a lot of effects. In some ways, I would have liked to have done more, but it wasn't in the script."

So what does he have coming up next? "Gulliver's Travels," he says. "I imagine that'll be almost totally on videotape, although I know nothing about it yet. Potentially it sounds very good: there's a lot of scope there."



camps by sighted warlords. For the rest of the story they hide out in the country, fighting a constant battle with the Triffids, which gather wherever they sense life.

As John Fleming has pointed out, the series is more drama than science fantasy. Ken Hannam and cameraman Peter Hall opted for a shadowy half-lit style, with swaying Triffid heads silhouetted against the sky, gangs of blind refugees waylaying a moving car and groping through the windows for a sighted guide to lead them to food and shelter, mobs of triffids bursting through a fence to move in on an isolated country house.

One feels Wyndham would have preferred this approach to the corny horror of the 1963 feature. Though never a great admirer of film, he became more so towards the end of his

life, when, after the filming of *The Midwich Cuckoos* as *Village of the Damned*, he agreed to come up with an original story for a sequel. When he failed, John Bailey wrote a new variation on the original idea that led to the excellent *Children of the Damned*. Wyndham, writing to the producer, Lawrence Bachman, admitted "I certainly could not have come up with anything that offered anything like the photogenic and atmospheric possibilities of the church settings." His last novel, *Web*, was written with the idea of filming it, which may be why he chose an unusual setting and story, a Pacific island overrun with sentient spiders. Friends advised him against publishing the book, and it did not see print until 1979, when it was an instant success. Wyndham's caution and that of his advisers

may have robbed us of an excellent film; meanwhile, we have this new and impressive version of his best-known novel to show how effective his vision of the world can be when transferred sensitively and intelligently to film.

The National Film Theatre will show the Siskel version of Day of the Triffids at 6.15 pm on 29th October. This will be followed at 8.30 by a Guardian Lecture discussion chaired by John Baxter, and featuring artists and technicians from the new BBC serial, of which extracts will be shown. Among those who have agreed to appear are adapter Douglas Livingstone and special effects man Steve Drewett, who will be bringing along materials from the series, including a genuine Triffid.



Opposite: Scenes from the BBC tv production of *Day of the Triffids*. Top: Triffids can be successfully destroyed by flame throwers, as demonstrated in this picture. Left: Emma Relp plays the character Josella Payton. Above: Bill Massen (John Duttine) and Josella.

The Thief of Bagdad

Feature by Phil Edwards

Alexander Korda was born on September 16, 1893 in Pusztatupaszo, Hungary. He was the oldest of three brothers, Zoltan and Vincent being the other two. His ambition was to become a journalist and at the age of 17 he went to Paris for a brief sojourn to pursue this career. When he returned to Hungary he found his knowledge of French brought him work sub-titling films. After some time he graduated to directing and made his first film in Budapest in 1914.

By 1917 his importance in the Hungarian film industry had grown tremendously and he planned and constructed the Hunnia Studios in Budapest. Following World War One, Korda moved to Vienna where he became director of Suscha Films, an adaptation of *The Prince and the Pauper* being his first film for the company. From 1918 to 1926 he directed several major films, both there and in Berlin.

The years 1926 to 1930 saw Korda in Hollywood directing several features. However Hollywood regarded Korda as just another *émigré* director and, somewhat demoralised, he moved his base of operations to England. It was there, in 1931, that he formed London Film Productions.

His first film under this guise was the hugely successful *Private Life of Henry VIII* with Charles Laughton. Using the success of *Private Life* as a means of raising money for further productions he went on to make *Don Juan*, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, *Saunders of the River*, *Things to Come*, *The Ghost Goes West* and *The Man Who Could Work Miracles*.

While he was developing these latter properties he secured a £500,000 debenture from Prudential Assurance Company and built the famous Denham Studios. In 1935 Korda became a partner in United Artists.

At the end of 1938 Korda was ousted as head of Denham Studios, though he retained a controlling interest in Denham Laboratories and was chairman of London films; along with his partnership in United Artists they provided valuable commodities.

In March 1939 he formed Alexander Korda Productions and planned to continue producing films at Denham. It was here, in that same month, that the first of these films began its stormy and troubled production, *The Thief of Bagdad*. However it would be nearly two years and six directors later before the release of what many consider the finest fantasy film ever made.

Though a classic version had been made in 1924 by Douglas Fairbanks Sr., and had its lavish production designed by William Cameron Menzies, Alex Korda decided against using that film as a model for his own production. He hired his old friend Lajos Biro, who had worked on the screenplay of *Things to Come*, and actor/writer Miles Maleson to provide a new treatment based on the first story of the Arabian Nights.

Korda's two most valuable stars were

Conrad Veidt and Sabu, and elephant stable boy discovered by documentary film

maker Robert Flaherty in India in 1937. It was Korda's intention to exploit these assets along with the technical expertise of Denham's special effects department which had developed over the years into the most accomplished such group in England.

Korda had wanted William Cameron Menzies to direct the epic fantasy and to work on the production design with Korda's brother Vincent. However Menzies was still working in Hollywood on the production of *Gone With The Wind*. Alex Korda had loaned out Vivien Leigh to David O. Selznick for that film on the understanding that Menzies would be available for *The Thief of Bagdad*. When the filming of *GWTW* dragged on an on it proved necessary to hire another director.

He chose and signed a German, Ludwig Berger, but before too long Korda would regret the decision.

When *The Thief of Bagdad* was first announced, Korda said that he wanted "to do with live actors what Walt Disney had done with drawings." Korda wanted to create a completely believable world of fantasy. A world in which absolute good battled absolute evil across a fantastic landscape peopled by larger than life storybook characters and where the acceptance of magic, both black and white, was perfectly normal.

It should also be remembered that Korda needed a big film to re-establish himself both in England and America, after the loss of



Above: Prince Ahmed (John Justin) and Sabu. Above right: Three scenes featuring Sabu the Elephant Boy. Right: One of the bizarre sets created for the film by Korda brother, Vincent.

control at Denham. He had seen the adult acceptance of both *Snow White* and *Wizard of Oz* and felt that with *The Thief of Bagdad* he too could find this cross-over audience and score heavily at the box office. It can also be assumed that Korda still felt bitter about the treatment he had received in Hollywood and he desperately wanted to prove to the American film industry that he was capable of producing the type of film which, at the time, was only associated with the Hollywood dream machine.

With *The Thief* in a somewhat shaky form of production, Korda slipped away to the South of France for a holiday and on the 3rd June, 1939 he married his promising new star Merle Oberon.

The director, Korda signed, Ludwig Berger, proved a problem from the beginning. He had worked in the theatre in Germany and also for Max Reinhardt. Berger had also directed three fantasy related films, *Cinderella* (1923) *Vagabond King* (1930) and *Three Waltzes* (1938) and though considered a more than capable director of actors he proved insufficient in the handling of scenes of spectacle and action. On return from his honeymoon Alex Korda was appalled at the footage shot and ordered most of it to be scrapped. He was unhappy too with the sets which his brother Vincent had designed, feeling they were not lavish or spacious enough. In one classic exchange between the two brothers Alex told Vincent, "You are crazy! Go away, get a lot of men, build it four times as big and paint it all crimson! It stinks!"

Vincent brought in other designers to assist him, including Ferdinand Bellan, Frederick Pusey and Percy Day, the latter providing

many of the fine scenic backgrounds which feature in the film. Some sources credit William Cameron Menzies as working on the film at this stage, though this is unlikely. It is probable however that Menzies sent some designs from Hollywood that towards the end of the filming in England he worked on the feature. It was when the production moved to Hollywood that the majority of his contribution took place.

To circumvent the problem of Berger, Korda brought in two other directors. Michael Powell was hired to handle the special effects and spectacle sequences and an American, Tim Whelan, for the action scenes such as fights and chases. Powell was sent off to Tintagel on the Cornish coast to shoot the scene in which Abu (*Sabu*) and Ahmad (*John Justin*) are shipwrecked, and the scene in which Abu finds a bottle and releases the Djinn (*Rex Ingram*).

Vincent Korda was also sent off to shoot second unit on the Cornish coast. With the shadow of Hitler's war machine building a sense of paranoia, spy scares were rife and Vincent found himself arrested by the local police and accused of filming destroyers at sea. However intercession came quickly and he was released.

Despite Korda's action in bringing other directors to work on Berger's project, the German refused to relinquish his contract. In another move to oust Berger from the production, Korda decided that he would personally co-direct scenes with the unhappy director.

Cast and crew would assemble on the set to find the two directors, both of whom would give different instructions to the bewildered unit who were at a loss as to whose directions

to follow. They usually ended up playing it by ear and simply hoped for the best. The tenacious Berger tolerated this treatment for some time before finally leaving the production.

Following this somewhat unethical behaviour by Korda, it seems ironic that Berger should still retain principal director's credit on the completed film. This would seem due more to contractual obligations rather than artistic input.

Work lurched ahead on the troubled production through the Summer of 1939 while Hitler's tanks and troops rumbled through Europe. War was inevitable and Korda, who counted Winston Churchill among his closest friends was fully aware that the filming could be halted at any time. Production was stepped up in an impossible effort to finish the film against the deadline of the war in Europe and in the last months of 1939 filming went on behind the heavily sandbagged walls of Denham Studios. When England finally declared war on Germany, Korda pulled his crews off *The Thief of Bagdad*. The ranks of technicians had been sadly depleted, with many of the younger men signing up for military service. With what craftsmen Korda could muster he hastily produced a low budget propaganda film *The Lion Has Wings*. Korda contemplated moving the production of *The Thief* to Canada, but the studios there were even less equipped to cope with a production as complex as *The Thief of Bagdad*.

In December 1939 Alexander Korda flew to America to set up operations in New York and Los Angeles at the behest of Winston

continued on page 40 ➤



An apology: Eagle-eyed readers might have noticed that the title of the film is written as "Thief of Bagdad" on this month's cover. The spelling of the cover copy was checked in Halliwell's Film Guide. We were, however, unhappy with that spelling and double checked it with the British Film Information Department, who assured us that the spelling on the film's original pressbook was in fact "Thief of Bagdad." This information came to light too late to correct the spelling on the cover. Thank you British Film Institute. And as for Halliwell's Film Guide...

A Starburst Interview

Conducted by Phil Edwards

Starburst: How did you get the part of Ahmed?

John Justin: There have been many stories about that. Every director and producer told a different story, one which benefitted them. Ludwig Berger, who spoke no English, said that he discovered me walking down the Strand. He saw this face and said immediately (he being a genius), "That's the chap!" Totally untrue. All that sort of publicity used to infuriate me. Nobody would say that I had already been on the stage since I was sixteen. I worked quite hard and starved quite a lot, but nobody wanted to say anything about that. I remember being interviewed by somebody from *The Times* when the film had been in production for a couple of months. I asked the reporter if he wanted the truth or wanted to make up a tale! There was a story about me being a sailor. There was a headline that said, *Sailor Becomes Star Overnight*. Or a cowboy. They took a part of my life and made it all of my life for publicity. They said anything except that you were an actor. That's dull. An actor becoming an actor, there's no story in that.

I was with the English side of Myron Selznick's agency. He was of course the brother of David O. Selznick. One of the Americans from the agency came over, a man called Harry Ham. There would be six selected people with the agency and every year he would come over and rush around London trying to sell us. He'd run around going, *John Justin, John Justin, The Greatest—John Justin!* until he was scarlet in the face. After three weeks of that people would start thinking, "John Justin? I've heard that name before somewhere."

After all that I got a call to go down to Denham to do a test. I wasn't too keen on it as hundreds had already done it. I was in a very bad mood and just did what they told me. A couple of days later I got a call from my agent who was jumping up and down telling me that Alexander Korda was on the line. The whole thing was like a dream.

What was Alex Korda like to work for?

Very frightening, to me. Though he wasn't, he looked tall. Very pale, a moon-like face, fat cheeks. He had a way of standing, holding his head up—a very imposing posture. And of course there was his accent, though he spoke English as well as anybody. But always with the thick Hungarian accent. His favourite expression was, "Nor farking good!"

So when the film started you had Ludwig Berger directing...

Yes. The reason he was chosen was that Alex Korda had no real sense of taste himself, like many producers. They have a tremendous instinct for listening to other people and of what the general feeling should be. Berger had just won an award for a lovely little picture called *Three Walzes*, set in a theatre. An intimate little picture full of close-ups. The script of *The Thief*, such as it was, was also written by a large number of people. You would be amazed at who wrote bits of that, including some famous authors. It should have had my name on it as well. I wrote nearly all my part as well as a lot of Sabu's, as he didn't speak very good English. That came about because the script we had was all written by Hungarians who didn't speak any English! I used to train Sabu. He asked me what was he going to say. He was very intelligent. Charming, lovely to work with and very funny. And a real go-getter. That's what killed him in the end. Go get the girls for one, go get anything else you can get and get a lot of money, which he did. He was a very rich man when he died. **How did the change in directors come about?**

Well, Berger proved a great flop of course. He just wasn't right for the picture. Alex Korda went away to America. We spent about three months working on it and Korda came back from America and looked at



what we had shot. He said, "It's no good!" We were given three days off. We didn't know what was happening. Then we started again with a new script on an entirely different scale.

Is that when Tim Whelan was brought on?

He was a dead loss! I must say. What really happened, and this was the second time I resigned. The first time was when they wanted to change my name to Ivan Steel—really gives an impression of strength, doesn't it?—After that they tried to change it to John Strong! They'd changed my teeth and my hair, I began to think they really didn't want me! So my agent went to Korda and said, "Alex, what about John Justin for a name?" Korda said, "John Justin, John Justin. It's not a bad name, I like that!"

The second time I nearly left was when the change of directors happened. Ludwig had proved no good, but Alex couldn't sack him because of his contract and Ludwig wouldn't leave. This is a sad thing to say because Alex had a lot of good qualities, he decided to pressurise him out of it. Whelan came in for a very short time when there was nobody else, though he was doing some second unit work on it as well.

What happened was that Berger and Korda both directed it at the same time. I remember vividly a scene with Sabu and I in the prison. They both came up and whispered in our ears not to take any notice of what the other had said. They had their own scripts and I had a script that was written by me! I took Sabu aside and we went away and rehearsed it. All we could do was what we thought was right ourselves. So we came back and did it and because it didn't correspond to what either of them had said, there was nothing they could do with it! On one occasion I actually saw Alex elbow Berger away at the side of the camera. The atmosphere was unbelievably tense. On another occasion they were arguing violently and I thought I'd had enough. As I leapt to my feet ready to quit, the famous shout went out, "Lunch!" and I was saved from losing my job.

It all went on in a blur like that, scene after scene. You never knew what was coming next, the script was still being made up as we went along. Scene upon scene. It was like shooting three films. We reshot so many scenes all the time as well as the three months shooting which was scrapped

with John Justin



altogether. We began to think there was never going to be a film at all. It was a terrible mess, except all the trick work, all the laboratory work was established very early on.

So you were doing a lot of blue screen work?

No, oddly enough. We were doing things where we had to work in a very confined area of action against nothing. The camera was set up a long way off, allowing the area to be masked off and a lot of the effects were done in the camera like that. There was a little bit of travelling matte against blue screen, but not very much. I think it was something quite new at the time. It was very tiring to do the special effects work like that.

A typical day would start at 8 in the morning, we would arrive and get made up and go on the set. Then there was usually a row about the script and it would be torn up. We'd all go off to have another coffee while that was rewritten and if you were lucky you might start shooting after lunch. Around six in the evening the director would get inspired and we'd go on. I'd finally get to bed about midnight and have to get up at six again the next morning to go to the

studio. That went on for months.

What are your recollections of Michael Powell working on the film?

Oh yes. He was a clear, cool vein running through that. But he was mostly on exteriors for it. *The costumes in The Thief were beautiful, I believe they were designed by Oliver Messel?*

Oh that's a funny story. He designed these beautiful costumes for me. All flowing tulle, lovely things. But for a ball in Vienne, not for a prince in Bagdad. I was embarrassed by them, I couldn't talk to anybody about them. I was quite a beautiful young man then, but the part had a tough side to it and the costumes were very inappropriate. I looked like a pink and blue cloud! It came time for me to go to the set for the first time in this costume and they were calling me. I just sat in my dressing room not wanting to be seen in this outfit. They kept on calling for me and finally I got a call to say that Korda was waiting on the set to see me. So I thought, "Right!" I went down the stairs to the set and there was Alex on the other side, seemingly miles away. I was followed by my regular entourage, hairdresser, makeup artist and all the rest,

and walked very slowly across the set towards Alex. I didn't put on any movements, just walked very slowly towards him. By the time I reached him his face was a study. As I stood in front of him he exploded, "Vot the fark is this."

So they called up this big Indian emporium in London, filled up a lorry with tons of clothes from it and brought it to the set. The lot was dumped on the set and they told me to choose what I wanted to wear in the film.

Were you still shooting at Denham when the war was declared?

I heard the declaration of war over the tannoy at Denham. I remember we all took the day off and went to Muir Matheson's house. I secretly joined the Air Force which I thought would stop Korda. Korda then said we were going to America. I went to Korda's office to tell him I couldn't go because I was in the Air Force. He just sat there and said, "Are you, John?" He picked up the phone and said to his girl, "Get me the Minister of Aviation." He just told the minister that he required me for further shooting in America and it was cleared like that. That was the kind of power and influence Korda had.

Who directed the sequences shot in America that you were in?

Zoltan Korda.

From my research I get the impression that Zoltan was quite happy to be away from the family set-up... I think that Zoltan may have been asked to direct the entire picture. Those three brothers were exactly like the Marx Brothers. They would come onto the set. Alex was Groucho, always walking ahead and with that slightly slouched forward pose that Groucho had. Behind him would come Zoltan, who was Chico and then would come Vincent. Oh, he would have made a splendid Harpo! Alex was very hard to work for. He was always changing his mind every three minutes. He didn't care about the cost at all. They'd do something and he wouldn't like it so they would have to do it again, even if it cost fifty thousand pounds.

What was Conrad Veidt like to work with?

He saved my life many, many times on that film. He and the cameraman were the only two people that could control Alex. But Connie Veidt was so sweet and helpful to me. So calm and quiet throughout it all and of course a marvellously good actor.

It is a wonderful performance. The character is so evil. Ha permeates the story even when he isn't on screen...

Yes, I'll tell you something about that. Whenever they discovered that they had left something out, which was often, given the disorganisation that film was shot in, they would shoot a close-up of his eyes. And those eyes would somehow reflect what had been left out. Connie really looked after me a lot as far as Alex was concerned. If I felt I was being treated badly he would speak to Korda on his own initiative and Alex would always listen to him.

Were the sets as enormous as they appear in the film?

They covered whole stages at Denham, they were huge. It's a good way to show you the way Berger worked. There was one scene in the market place with Sabu and myself and about ten extras. Berger shot the whole thing like that. When Korda came back to the film he had the whole thing reshot. The set took up an entire stage and there were five hundred extras instead of ten, camels, elephants and two tons of fruit and fish. It took four minutes to walk from one end of the set to the other. Same script, same dialogue to cover the scene as when Berger shot it. I ran out of dialogue halfway across it and Korda was saying, "Say something, John, anything."

The palace set also looks huge...

That was the one the horse peed on! It took so long to light the sets and the poor horse is standing there under the hot lights and by the time they are ready to go, so is the horse—twice. They had to wash the floor and of course that held everything up. I remember Alex coming onto the set to find out what the delay was. He said, "Vot der holdup, boys?" When they told him he replied, "Awwww God! Cannot these things be arranged?"

Thank you for sharing your reminiscences with Starburst.



Churchill. The nation's leader saw the offices of an English film company as a suitable cover for a clearing house for information gathered by British secret agents operating in the then-neutral United States.

Korda found offices on Las Palmas Avenue in the heart of Hollywood and it was here amidst an atmosphere of cloak and dagger espionage that the second stage of the planning of *The Thief* took place.

With the problems that Korda had encountered on the film in England and the possible thought that the feature would never be finished he became bored with the complex project and handed over the production to his brother Zoltan who had been living in Hollywood for some time.

In July 1940 principal actors and technicians were brought over from England and Zoltan found studio space at General Services Studio. It was here and in the Grand Canyon in Arizona where the final scenes were shot under the supervision of Zoltan and William Cameron Menzies.

Twenty months after the film had started production in England, *The Thief of Bagdad* was finally previewed to the press in October 1940.

The film was well received, despite its troubled production history.

"The most magnificent Technicolor spectacle of all times—overshadows anything that has ever been made."

Motion Picture Review of Reviews.

"It depicts the victory of good over evil, of love over hate and of youth over disaster. The first meeting of Ahmed and the princess, the former being reflected in a pool, and Abu's audience in the land of legends with the old king are exquisite."

Kinematograph Weekly, 26/11/40

"In this lavish production the carefully planned colour scheme and the skilful use of the camera make one of the most satisfactory colour films yet created. The story is as loose

as that of any pantomime, to which type play the film can be compared. Extensive use is made of trick photography and this is the least satisfactory aspect of the production."

Monthly Film Bulletin, January 1941

This last comment from the August MFB certainly seems somewhat out of place, even by today's standards of special effects. *The Thief of Bagdad* is a feast of optical and mechanical effects and when one considers the problems to be mastered for the effect scenes to be shot in the early Technicolour process then the film becomes more of an achievement.

What the Monthly Film Bulletin obviously misunderstood was that film contained more "trick photography" than they realised. Certainly some of the effects scenes look a little rough around the edges but *The Thief* contains so much in the way of effects of one kind or another that the few that were below



Top row, left to right: Sabu in a succession of tight spots. Particularly effective is the giant genie foot which almost crushes him to a pulp. Needless to say, catastrophe is averted. Bottom row, left to right: Magician Conrad Veidt, and henchman, up to no good. Heroine June Duprez held captive by the baddies. But Prince Ahmed (John Justin) is on hand to attempt a rescue. A portrait of the principle good guys (and girl) — Sabu, June Duprez and John Justin.

average shouldn't spoil the overall effect of the film.

One of the biggest mechanical effects used was the giant foot and hand of the djinn.

"(The art department) first modelled a hand in clay, the same shape as Ingram's but many times enlarged—from the wrist to the fingertips it measured 40ft and seven tons of clay were used in its making. When the modelling was complete, plaster casts were made and 36 sections were necessary to obtain the exact shape of the hand. From these casts, papier mache parts were constructed and the 'hand' was well on its way.

"But the script demanded that the fingers should close around Sabu, which meant that before the great hand was assembled, machinery had to be put into the fingers and thumb to make them movable. As the hand was to be shown in close up, it had to look as human as possible and the art department looked around for a substitute for skin.

Bearing in mind that the fingers and thumb





One of the excellent, extravagant sets designed by Vincent Korda and his team. If you look very carefully you can just make out where the real set ends and the glass painting takes over. If you're still not sure, the line runs along the top of the gateway.

were going to be movable, it was essential that the skin be pliable, and rubber solution was the answer. Nearly a hundred coats were used, and it not only looked and behaved like real skin, but its thickness successfully disguised the joints in the papier mâché.

*From British Technicolour Films
by John Huntley, 1950*

The Thief of Bagdad contains nearly 140 special effects shots of one kind or another. Almost every camera effect known to the industry in those days was used, from travelling matte to hanging miniatures, from tank work with model sailing ships to back projection. The nature of Technicolour in those days required a high standard of optical work, the film stock being extremely slow and requiring vast amounts of light to record clean, sharp images.

Despite the reliance on special effects in the film, it is the simple story of good versus evil and the enormity of the canvas on which the spectacle is presented which makes **The Thief** still a pleasure after all these years.

Adding greatly to the effect is the

wonderful score composed by Miklos Rosza. Rosza had already scored **Four Feathers** and **Knight Without Armour** for Korda and was brought onto **The Thief** when the score composed by Oscar Straus proved unsuitable. In an interview in 1976 Rosza recalled his feelings about the feature:

"I loved **The Thief of Bagdad**. I lived with it day in, day out for well over a year and it became part of me. It had so many fine qualities—imagination, poetry, the fine acting of Conrad Veidt and Miles Malleon, above all the superb sets of Vincent Korda. Visually the production was so sheerly beautiful that it was bound to prompt a composer to try to give of his best. I like to think the love I bore **The Thief of Bagdad** is in some way reflected in the music I composed for it.

*Interview in Film Music Notebook
Vol 2, No 4, 1976*

The Thief of Bagdad was a landmark fantasy film, a film for all ages. An attempt was made to remake it in 1960 in Italy with Steve Reeves with little success, lacking all of

the magical properties of the Korda version. A further remake was slung together a couple of years ago with Terry Stamp taking the role originally played by Conrad Veidt. Though released theatrically in this country the film was made for overseas television market. It garnered some of the worst reviews afforded a fantasy film outside of **Hawk the Slayer**.

Forty years after it was first released **The Thief of Bagdad** still has the ability to entertain audiences afresh with its zestful sense of wonder and adventure. The original advertising campaign really sums it all up:

"Thrill to the masked magician who turns a Prince into a beggar . . . A boy into a barking dog!

"Thrill to the mountainous genie! Guarded by fierce "Green Men" . . . The thousand tentacled octopus!

"Thrill to the wondrous web! Abu fights the monstrous Spider King!

"Thrill to the thousand and one sights from the Thousand And One Nights in magic Technicolor!

"Thrill to the **Thief of Bagdad**!"

COLINE présente

Une production
ALEXANDER KORDA

EN COULEURS NATURELLES

LE VOLEUR DE BAGDAD

RÉALISÉ PAR LUDWIG BEIGER ET MICHAËL POWELL

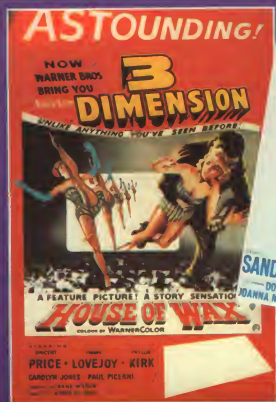
CONRAD VEIDT - SABU - JUNE DUPREZ
JOHN JUSTIN - REX INGRAM - MARY MORRIS



This month *Starburst* presents the first in an irregular series of Poster Galleries. The theme for this one was inspired by sheer volume of movie posters, especially those from the late fifties and early sixties that featured a glamorous heroine under threat (of one kind or another) from some hideous creature. We'd be interested in hearing your suggestions for future poster galleries. In the meantime, enjoy!

Research by Phil Edwards

monsters & maidens



monsters & maidens

> continued



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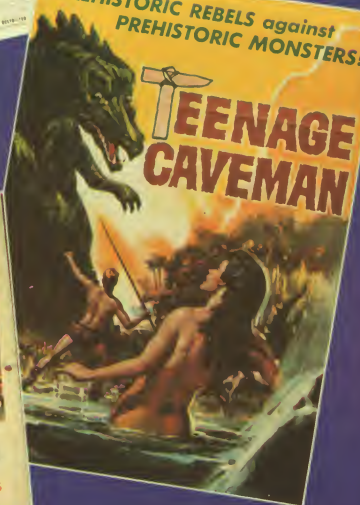
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and what
will be
left of
them?**



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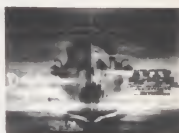
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2. NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD



3. DEATH SHIP



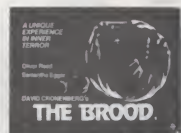
4. ZOMBIES – DAWN OF THE DEAD



5. SCANNERS



6. EXTERMINATOR



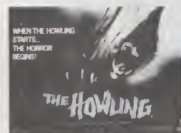
7. THE BROOD



8. BLOOD BEACH



9. SILENT SCREAM



10. THE HOWLING



11. ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13/
HALLOWEEN



12. ZOMBIE FLESH EATERS

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INVASION OF THE BOOTY SNATCHERS

Feature
by
Alan
Jones

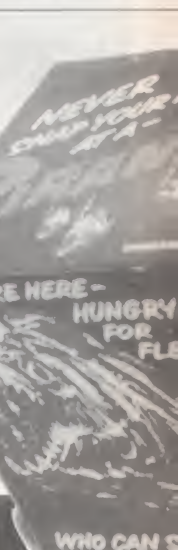
What do these films have in common? *Caveman*, *Excalibur*, *Werewolf in a Girl's Dormitory*, *Marooned*, *Rasputin—The Mad Monk*. Give up? How about *Piranha*, *Torture Garden*, *The Empire Strikes Back*, *The Howling*?

Well, the answer is—promotional accessories. By that I don't mean T-shirts or badges that are on sale in cinema foyers, I mean items that have been given away as part of an advertising campaign or as a publicity stunt to get us to see a particular film. These are often things that the general public don't know about and are usually given to members of the press, or quite often a preview audience, prior to a film's release to spread word of mouth and act as a talking point. Of course the most obvious giveaways that spring to mind are T-shirts and badges but it is the rarer items I would like to draw your attention to, as not only do I avidly collect them (Well, stranger things than these have turned out to be priceless!) but I find them a revealing history of how far film publicists are often prepared to go to try and put their film title on everybody's lips.

Remaining on the subject of badges for a moment, a lot of you must have a "May the force be with you" badge, but are you aware that the same design and lettering was used for the *Alien* badge? "You are my Lucky Star" was the logo for that. Other rare badges, for *Scanners* and *The Howling*, have both dispensed with the standard circular shape and are rectangular. Two of the rarer badges I have are for *Warlords of Atlantis* (if only it could have been a decent film) and *Doc Savage—The Man of Bronze*, which is cardboard and very definitely "handle with care". Other badges you may not know about are "It's Coming"—*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, "It'll be all bite on the nite"—*Piranha*, "They were your friends"—*Zombies* and "I saw it"—*Eraserhead*. The appeal of badges (and T-shirts for that matter) to publicists are obvious, the wearer becomes a walking billboard and to some degree the same is true about stickers except in this case they are stuck on lamp posts, windows, envelopes—everything, and anything, in the public eye. For the most part stickers are just usually the title of the film with something ominously intriguing like "I survived *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*". One of the most effective stickers to have appeared recently on stairways and doors has been the warning "Mind Your Head" and in very small print "The *Scanners* are about". Another very effective sticker was used in France for the film *When a Stranger Calls*. An alluring picture of the star, Carol Kane, had "She needs you" emblazoned above it. You were implored to ring a phone number, and if you did you heard a teaser trailer and details of where the film was playing. The sticker that is my pride and joy however is the one Harrison Ford gave to me prior to the beginning of filming *Star Wars*. When he gave it to me it was called *The Star Wars* and it is this coupled with the triangular impression of Luke Skywalker that makes it of historical

importance. It is this sort of coup that collectors of this kind of trivia, like myself, find so rewarding. But it doesn't stop at stickers. There are many, more bizarre, attention grabbers that often go unreported and are the most fun. For example, when United Artists sent out their press invitations for *Piranha*, unsuspecting critics opened the envelopes and were scared to half to death when a flattened box device popped into

shape snapping at their fingers. That certainly made them take note. Disney recently tried a similar play with *Condorman*. When the envelope was opened, out fluttered a tiny Michael Crawford figure. (Let's face it, it flew more convincingly than anything in the movie!) Or, how about the boxes of sand and glitter that Hammer tried to pass off as *Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires* dust. "There is danger of reincarnation if mixed



with the dust from other boxes" read the warning on the side. I think most people took more notice of the other warning "Not to be taken internally." Hemdale handed out bright red rosettes saying "I am the Hound of the Baskervilles" at Cannes, setting the tone perfectly for that ill-fated Peter Cook and Dudley Moore starrer. Again at Cannes Cinema Shares International gave out plastic vampire teeth for their little-seen, minor classic, *Thirst*. Then there were the John Bolton comic books for *The Monster Club* which were an attempt by I.T.C. to drum up interest in what turned out to be a lacklustre film. Bolton's comic, on the other hand, is a masterpiece.

So far though, the things I've been mentioning are of a rather elite nature, although you can find them if you look hard enough. So what are the gimmicks that are used to try and get you to part with your money at the box offices?

Well, there were the cardboard glasses to give you that zombie look for *Plague of the Zombies*. Other Hammer tricks were

cardboard beards for *Rasputin—The Mad Monk* and for the double bill of *The Gorgon* and *Curse of the Mummy's Tomb*, strips of black stamps featuring "your favourite horror stars" were given to "the first 10,000 people in line". Think about that for a moment and their generosity begins to pale. William Castle, the undisputed King of the Gimmicks, came more down to earth than electrically wired seats and mobile skeletons with his 13 Ghosts viewer. Look through the red filter to see the ghosts, look through the blue one if you're scared. Advance publicity for Castle's *Zotz!* were gold plastic replicas of the coin used by Tom Poston in the film to make life move in slow motion. For his *Straightjacket*, cardboard axes smeared in blood were handed out in the foyer. Packets of seeds to grow your own *Torture Garden* were given out at drive-ins for that particular Amicus release. In reality, if you did plant them, all you got was crab grass. "Witch protection packets" of salt, to help ward off evil spirits were handed out during the American release of *Night of the Eagle* (US title *Burn Witch*

Burn). A seed called "Satan's Soul" was supplied to protect you from *The Brotherhood of Satan* but strangest of all was the card you received when you went to see the double bill of *The Horrible Dr. Hitchcock*, (GB title *The Terror of Dr. etc.*) and *The Awful Dr. Orloff*, (GB title *The Demon Doctor*). "Warning!" it said, "The girl's figure on this card has been treated with the erotiphile process, (in reality—a flocked on bikini), you will find it pleasurable to stroke with your fingertips". However prolonged stroking was discouraged in case you too became obsessed with Dr. Hitchcock's secret. And if that happened, you were also warned that not even Dr. Orloff could help you. Ahh!

That's just the tip of the iceberg though. You could also have obtained a *Silithis* "survival kit", (survive what?—The boredom?), a balloon imprinted with that strange Mia Farrow film *Full Circle*, a beer mat for *The Empire Strikes Back*, (Yes—a beer mat!) and books of matches for *Alien* and *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Werewolf masks were what you got if you went to see *Werewolf in a Girl's Dormitory*, (I bet that's something not even John Landis had thought of). Or how about the marvellous stunt dreamed up by Hemisphere Pictures to promote their Phillipino schlock horror film *Beast of Blood* which played on people's basest instincts of greed. Fake 10 dollar bills were distributed on the sidewalks of major cities and when people picked them up and unfolded them they were surprised to find this—"More than 10 dollars worth of Super shock entertainment awaits you when you see *Beast of Blood*". "Don't worry about littering" said the pressbook. . . . Then there's the fake newspaper gimmick like *The Terrifying Times* calculated to draw your attention to the *Fear Flasher* and *Horror Horn* device in *Chamber of Horrors*. A more recent variation of this was the *Daily Caveman* distributed outside Underground stations to promote *Caveman*. "Man bites Dinosaur" was one of the wittier headlines. In the bad taste department is the vomit bag given to every patron who braved the V (for Violence) rating and sat through Michael Armstrong's outrageously sadistic *Mark of the Devil*.

There is another strata of give-aways that even I hardly ever see. These are the up-market gifts given to executives within film companies to keep them interested in an upcoming release and the more influential VIPs like important critics to make them aware of the film. Such as the fully workable miniature guillotine for George Romero's *Martin*, the glass ashtray with the poster logo in gold for *Marooned*, the *Twilight's Last Glimmer* desk set, the pens and pencils of which form a perfect nuclear base profile. Those close to director Joe Dante each received a silver bullet keyring with *The Howling* embossed in red on the side. For the London and New York premieres of *Superman*, important personnel were given a Cartier brooch in the shape of the Superman's "S". More recently each person lucky enough to be invited to meet John Boorman for lunch were given a set of four exquisite lithographs of the differing poster art for *Excalibur*.

These are a few of the ones that I know of. I wonder how many others there are that I don't? I'll find out sooner or later though. I'm sure the list goes on and on. Publicity is at the soul of financial success for any movie. If a movie is a classic and no one sees it, there really isn't much point, is there? That's why I like this sort of fun promotion. A bottle of slime can't really make *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* a masterpiece but at least it tries to make it seem worthwhile somehow. A Zardoz badge saying "Beyond 2001" is simply the icing on the cake.



it's only a movie

Due to a temporary transmission fault with John Brosnan, we are unable to bring you the scheduled column this month. Our esteemed film critic appears to have gone off on a tangent and sent us a chapter from his forthcoming autobiography "Irwin Allen: My Part in his Downfall" instead of the expected monthly look at the fantasy film scene. Do not adjust your magazine...

What can I do but apologise to the millions of loyal readers who were, no doubt, eagerly awaiting a glimpse of me on the televised Roger Corman lecture that was transmitted back in August (and which I mentioned in issue 34). Unfortunately, my noble features were almost completely blocked by the head and shoulders of our beloved film censor, Mr James Ferman. Viewers with the eyes of hawks would have been able to detect the top of my head and, during one exciting moment when he leaned slightly forward, part of my left eyebrow. I know he blocked me deliberately. This means war.

Gremlins in the *Starburst* works again prevented a true likeness of me reaching these pages in issue 37—the fey-looking leprechaun on page 53 certainly wasn't me and I have no idea where he came from. But this time the *real* me is being represented here. (See below). This is the face that stares back at me in the bathroom mirror—on the days I can see that far. Accept no other brand.

The *Terrible Jaw-Man* debacle that I described in issue 35 wasn't the only occasion that I've been involved in a movie venture that failed to get off the ground. The first time was way back in 1970, a year when some *Starburst* readers probably couldn't even reach the 'On' switch on their parents' tv sets but when I was already in my early twenties—a lithe, square-jawed young man ready for travel and adventure (actually I rather resembled Indiana Jones back then except I carried a sling-shot instead of a bull-whip).

My chance of adventure came during a regular meeting of the Sydney Science Fiction Society (named after the city, not a person) when someone announced they were buying a second-hand double-decker bus with the intention of driving it up through India and all the way to Germany where the 1970 World SF Convention was being held. On hearing this I immediately leapt up, fell over (I'd been drinking heavily), leapt up again and yelled, "Count me in!"

Fateful words indeed which were to have many repercussions, one of which is me being here writing this column instead of being 10,000 miles away surfing, rounding up jolly jumbucks, being bitten to death by snakes and all that other fun Australian stuff.

As to where the movie came in—well, the idea was to make a 16mm film of the whole trip and sell it to TV companies around the world and make a fortune, etc (you know the routine). It all sounded simple. We obtained the loan of a Bolex 16mm camera from the wealthy sf fan and publisher Ron Graham (now sadly deceased) and Kokak kindly donated about 50 rolls of film. We were all set except for one thing—there was no one among us who'd ever made a film before.

However we did have a fellow with us,

called Dick, who knew how to operate a 16mm camera so he automatically got landed with the responsibility for making the movie. Dick wasn't too happy about this, his main concern being how to keep this valuable piece of borrowed equipment safe. Thus he kept the Bolex wrapped in plastic and locked in a metal box under his bunk on the top deck of the bus. That meant that when anything happened that we thought deserved to be preserved on film the cry would go up: "Dick! Dick! Get the Bolex!" But by the time Dick had roused himself, climbed upstairs, unlocked the box, unwrapped the camera and got it ready for use whatever had prompted the cry was usually all over. Many was the startling scene we *almost* got on film.

At first I didn't pay much attention to the film side of the operation as I was busy on my own project—I was writing a book about the trip as it happened which would, of course,

end up being a comic masterpiece and earn me a fortune (with this fortune and my share in the *other* fortune I would be sitting pretty). However I'd only reached page 3 when I had to sell my typewriter. We were in New Delhi at the time and I'd run out of money.

After that, as we slowly chugged our way up through India in our bright blue, clapped-out double-decker bus (called, laughingly, *Pegasus*!) I became aware that Dick was going about the film the wrong way. He was only shooting things of exterior interest, like the scenery and famous sights like the Taj Mahal (I actually missed seeing the Taj Mahal when we were in Agra—I spent the day trying to sell my camera as I'd run out of money again). What he should have been filming was the bus itself, and us, as that was where the novelty value of the enterprise lay.

"Dick, we should be filming the bus *against* the scenery," I told Dick one day as he sat



starring

John Brosnan

there worriedly examining the Bolex for signs of wear & tear. "As it is we're not making a film about the bus trip but simply shooting a series of post card scenes..."

Dick agreed so we devised the manoeuvre of getting off the bus and having it backtrack down the road while we set the camera, and then it drives up the road again as we film it. Well, we did this a couple of times but it was such a time-consuming operation that I realized we'd still be in India in 1984 if we did it continuously. To have done the job properly what we really needed was a second vehicle—a camera car, in effect. The slightest amount of thinking ahead should have made this obvious even before we'd left Australia but thinking ahead was something none of us had much skill at... otherwise we'd never have started out on the journey in the first place. Let me tell you that a double-decker bus, especially one like ours that could only

do 38mph at top speed and boiled over at the merest hint of an incline, is *not* the ideal vehicle in which to see the world.

Dick's attempts at filming the life of the passengers met with little approval. There were 14 of us crowded into its cramped spaces and relations between us all had quickly deteriorated. People didn't take kindly to Dick filming them getting up, dressing, eating, arguing, fighting, sulking and wandering off into the wilderness with a roll of toilet paper and a shovel. Poor Dick was constantly being told what he could do with the Bolex and few of these suggestions had anything to do with film-making.

Even I, by far the nicest person there, didn't take kindly to Dick filming me on the occasion when the bus was going down the other side of the Khyber Pass—at an angle of about 90 degrees. At the time I was trying to cry and drink a bottle of Indian-made gin

simultaneously.

But as the trip progressed I think the footage Dick got improved tremendously. We recorded some fascinating material in Afghanistan and Iran (it's strange how most of the countries we passed through later exploded into chaos and revolution) and there were at least two marvellous sequences in Turkey; one where we got jammed under a traffic bridge in Ankara in the middle of the rush hour and practically bringing the city to a halt; the second when we made a bizarre journey across the Bosphorous in a ferry that had to go *backwards* in order for us to be able to drive the bus off on the other side.

Unfortunately we never filmed the incident in Lahore, Pakistan, when I and another person lost the bus. We were following it on a motorbike which ran out of petrol. The bus was being taken to a garage for some repair work but we had no idea where the garage was being located. All we could think of to do was to go to the Tourist Information Office and ask the surprised girl behind the desk if she could help us find a missing bright blue double decker bus. Overhearing this odd request an American woman tourist in the office exclaimed: "My God, I don't believe this! It's like something out of the movies!"

By the time we got to Greece the movie had become a black farce. The engine kept blowing up and the bus had to be towed everywhere. Temporary repairs were made and the bus continued on into Italy and to a planned reception in Florence being held by an Italian oil company who had sponsored us back in Australia. Unfortunately the engine blew up for the final time on the road into Florence and the oil company executives were treated to the sight of the bus, emblazoned with the name of their oil, being dragged into Florence behind a tow truck. They were not happy.

The bus had come to its final stop. It was sold for scrap and we all went our separate ways. Most of us never made it to the World SF Convention in Heidelberg which had been, originally, the object of the whole trip.

And as for the movie—well, when the exposed film was finally taken to a London lab it was discovered that every roll had become spoilt, presumably due to the intense heat along the way (we did have a refrigerator on board where we had stored the film but it rarely worked properly). Out of the many hours of footage we had only about 10 minutes could have been salvaged... so bang went another potential fortune.

Looking back on it now one realizes what a marvellous opportunity we lost. Making that same journey in 1981 is impossible unless you do it in a Chieftain tank supported by a couple of Phantom jet fighters. It would have been good to have a record of those far-off days when a bunch of young idiots could drive a bright blue double-decker bus from India to Europe without suffering anything worse than diarrhoea.

I sometimes dream of the film we could have fashioned out of all that footage... I can see the credits... "RAIDERS OF THE LOST DOUBLE-DECKER BUS! starring JOHN BROSINAN AND OTHERS. See BROSINAN CONQUER THE KHYBER PASS! See HIM SWEEP ACROSS AFGHANISTAN... See HIS TRIUMPHANT ENTRANCE INTO TEHRAN!"

And so on ●



Record World

There are two ways of arriving at the musical soundtrack for your latest film; either have the score specially composed, or take excerpts from existing recordings. The former is the more usual, and in many ways, easier, for you can have the composition tailored to fit the action exactly and musical themes can be arranged to fit themes in the plot. In addition, from a director's point of view, it will be much less time-consuming to hand the bulk of the musical responsibility over to the composer, probably coming in only for the final decisions.

This isn't to say that you cannot make an effective soundtrack from existing recordings; Stanley Kubrick proved this after all with *2001*, and after he'd commissioned and abandoned a specially written score!

2001 hasn't been the only film to not have a specially composed musical soundtrack, but it's true to say they are the exception rather than the rule. With documentaries though it's normally the other way round. Directors will normally have a greater proportion of their time allocated to sorting out appropriate music and the pictures can usually be juggled around with far greater freedom than with a fictional story. In many ways I feel this benefits the documentary style, for, say, having a new theory expounded to the accompaniment of a familiar piece of music can make it all the more memorable.

I saw my first glimpse of *Cosmos* as an NTSC tape on a U-Matic machine with a small monitor, in a BBC viewing room, fortified by a cup of BBC coffee; none of which is exactly conducive for a relaxed atmosphere. I wasn't sure what I was going to see (I'm still not sure what I did see!), but I was immediately intrigued by the opening and decided it was worth sitting through the rest, which actually consisted of episodes 1 and 6. I found them, in the main, quite enthralling, particularly the way the audio and visual imaging was used. All of the musical soundtrack was taken from existing recordings, and over the 13 episodes, *Cosmos* gets through a fair proportion of the recording catalogues. However as the series unfolded it became apparent *Cosmos* too had themes, albeit nebulously philosophical ones and pieces of music became associated with various of these ideas. The record—*The Music of Cosmos* (RCA LP 5032) does not contain all the music selected for the series—that would probably need 13 LPs—but it has been carefully compiled to be a representative cross-section of the saga.

The recording is split into 6 parts, 3 per side, each with a title in keeping with the programmes, but not in fact matching any of the episodes. Each part then consists of a selection of music used during the series and which is thought to be appropriate to the section and put together in such a way that each piece segues into the next.

With some tracks this is done by fading one track into the next, usually arranged so that the pieces die away and build up in complementary keys. Other tracks use linking sound effects to get from one piece of music to the next. It has all been very cleverly and expertly done and the possible clashes that could occur when you go from a modern electronic piece to a full symphony orchestra with a completely different piece of music does not occur.

As an example, the album opens with the



Cosmos theme, the haunting extract from Vangelis's *Heaven and Hell*. This then becomes the slow movement from Shostakovich's 11th Symphony and then fades into another Vangelis piece, "Alpha" (from the album *Albedo 0.39*).

Vangelis provides over a large portion of the total record and what with *Charlots of Fire* and even more recently the French TV series *Opera Sauvage* seems to be turning to soundtracks, though I suppose his contribution to *Cosmos* is purely by chance.

One other track by him, near the end of the record, is another good example of music fitting a theme.

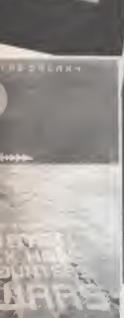
The most recent episode I have watched—number 12 *Encyclopedia Galactica*—dealt at one point with the world's largest radio telescope, Arecibo in Puerto Rico. As one of its many tasks the giant dish listens out for virtually anything coming from "out there". The music track that accompanied the shots of the giant antenna dish was called *Entendus les Chiens Aboier?*, which translates as

"Can You Hear the Dogs Barking?"—Canis Major and Minor presumably?

Composed by veteran film soundtrack composer Laurence Rosenthal and orchestrated by veteran Herbert Spencer, the *Clash of the Titans* soundtrack album (CBS 73588) is rendered by the now veteran film soundtrack orchestra, the London Symphony Orchestra. Full use is made of the orchestra in a grandiose score that involves additions to the normal compliment of instruments, such as the harp and the glockenspiel. It's one of those scores that benefits from several sittings, for, apart from the immediately recognisable theme, none of the tracks are initially memorable.

For *Your Eyes Only* I thought one of the best Bond films to date. With the change of style, or I suppose, a modification of the style, comes yet another composer to the ranks of those who have supplied the soundtrack to a Bond film. John Barry has still done more than anyone else put together, but then it did all begin with off-forgotten Monty

GER MOORE
ES BOND 007
R EYES ONLY



Norman way back with **Dr No**, whose still-used James Bond Theme says "Bond" more directly than any other factor. George Martin provided the music for **Live and Let Die** and more recently, Marvin Hamlisch wrote the score for **The Spy Who Loved Me**. Newest addition is Bill Conti who certainly put his own stamp on the production. A number of the pieces on the album (EMI/Liberty LBG 30337) are very Big Band orientated, rather than orchestral, with a couple of easy-going flugel horn solos, one on each side of the record. Sheena Easton provides the almost obligatory theme song, joining the ranks of such artists as Carly Simon, Paul McCartney and Wings, Matt Munroe, Tom Jones, Nancy Sinatra and more than anyone else, Shirley Bassey. Two Bonds didn't have theme songs as such. **Dr No** was one and **On Her Majesty's Secret Service**, although it featured Louis Armstrong delightfully grating out "We have all the time in the World", it wasn't the actual theme.

Sheena's "For Your Eyes Only" isn't

perhaps the most memorable Bond song though she does make a first by actually appearing in vision during the very impressive opening titles. Overall though I found the most enjoyable track on the record to be the end of side one—"St Cyril's Monastery", which to me has that mysterious appeal that I feel Bond soundtracks should have.

Full of mystery, especially in the opening scene, was John Boorman's **Excalibur**. The record for this film is entitled *Music from the film Excalibur* (Island ILPS 9682) though "Wagner's Greatest Hits" could be equally appropriate, for apart from the one exception, all the established repertoire of music used in the film came from this composer. In fact, the record features "other selections" of Richard Wagner's masterpieces and the sleeve notes do take pains to point out that the record is "not the original soundtrack recording". It's also slightly odd that there was in fact a screen credit for **Trevor Jones** for "music composed and conducted by", none of which

is featured on the record, though I suspect that his contribution was more for the less prominent, but equally important, linking passages between one bit of Wagner and the next, which wouldn't really have made individual tracks in themselves.

However as far as the record is concerned you do get other recordings of the music that was used in the film, including the disturbing "Siegfried's Funeral March" from "Gotterdammerung" which is used as a theme over the titles. Also used are the "Prelude to Act 1" of "Parsifal" and the "Prelude to 'Tristan and Isolde,'" the latter of which seems to turn up where any "instant romantic" setting is required. The Wagnerian filler pieces are perhaps two of his best known compositions. One is "The Ride of the Valkyries" which shouldn't need any introduction and neither should the other—"Prelude to Act 3 of Lohengrin."

The welcome intruder to an otherwise totally Wagnerian repertoire is an excerpt from Carl Orff's "Carmina Burana." This extract is "O Fortuna" which begins and ends the whole piece, and if you are not familiar with "Carmina Burana," it is basically a set of bawdy 13th Century songs mainly in Latin set to music by Orff in the 1930s. "O Fortuna" is probably the best known having earlier been featured in a tv commercial for aftershave, though another song "Ecce Gratum" found its way into another tv advert a few years ago for some bread or another.

The work itself is best live and I thoroughly recommend it if ever you should get a chance to see it performed. It's also quite a spectacular sight for it requires a large chorus, a boy's choir, three soloists, a full orchestra with a large section and two pianos.

Meco Monardo must also be quite an impressive sight live. He bounced into our lives with his version of the **Star Wars** theme which was more like a potted history of the whole **Star Wars** saga than a simple version of the main theme. There were Wookiees, lasers, R2s and sounds of the Cantina filling in the gaps between the music, or rather, the music filling in the gaps between the sounds of the Cantina, R2s, lasers and Wookiees.

He followed up this musical biography with another. This time it was on the **Wizard of Oz**, and yes, included everyone, the Wicked Witch of the West, the Cowardly Lion and even Toto the dog.

Both pieces are included on the album *Meco—Across the Galaxy* (RCA FL 43242), along with eight other intergalactic goodies, though some are more goodie than others. The potted storyline approach is applied to **Close Encounters** and although quiet successful there is really less in this film to give you immediately identifiable sounds, with the exception of the talking synthesizers. However, the other themes also find their way into the assembly and a little voice says "bye" a couple of times at the end.

I thought the "Star Trek Melody" at the end of side one came out best with a selection of the themes from the film, sorry, Motion Picture. This is apart from the fact that it begins exactly like Emerson, Lake and Palmer's "Fanfare for the Common Man," and most objectionably half way through a silly voice informs you that you are about to go into warp drive—so be warned! Perhaps I'll go back and listen to **Cosmos** "Depicting the Cranes in their Nests." It's far more restful.

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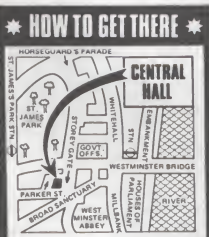
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ZONE

BY TISE VAHIMAGI

This month we look at a seminal British television series, *Danger Man*, which led directly to *The Prisoner*.

Contrary to popular opinion—especially in fan circles—there is no evidence to show that the *Danger Man* series led directly to *The Prisoner* series. *Danger Man*, after some five years on the air, simply exhausted itself and left Patrick McGeehan the opportunity to achieve full control and produce *The Prisoner*. In short, Number 8 is not John Drake.

However, I've decided to look back at the early days of *Danger Man* (by way of a listing of all 39 half-hour episodes), and in particular the series' creator, Ralph Smart.

Ralph Smart was born in London, England, in 1908. He entered the movie industry in 1927 and became editor for British Instructional Studios. From 1929 to 1940 he directed documentaries and wrote feature screenplays. He then enlisted with the Royal Australian Air Force where he directed official films, 1940-44. Ealing Studios engaged Smart as associate producer for *The Overlanders* in Australia, where he stayed to write, produce and direct the award-winning *Bush Christmas*. He returned to England in '47 and directed *A Boy, A Girl, A Bike* and a segment of the anthology *Quartet*. In 1950 he directed *Bitter Springs* (in Australia), collaborated on screenplay of *Where No Vultures Fly*, leading to *Never Take No For An Answer* (co-dir.), *Curtain Up* and *Always a Bride* (both dir.).

In 1955 he turned to television, writing and directing, and eventually producing. From '55 to '58 Smart worked on *Adventures of Robin Hood*, *The Buccaneers*, *Adventures of Sir Lancelot*, *Adventures of William Tell*, and *The Invisible Man*.

In 1960, Smart created and developed *Danger Man*—and succeeded in getting Patrick McGeehan to play agent John Drake. The series ran from '60 to '61 and, after a break of three years, returned in an hour format. The following list gives episode titles (in order of original telecasts), directors, writers, and lead players, along with a short synopsis:

View from the Villa (Sept 11, 1960) d. Terry Bishop w. Ralph Smart w/Barbara Shelley, Delphi Lawrence, John Lee. John Drake is assigned to solve the murder of a banker and locate a missing 5,000,000 dollars.

Time to Kill (Sept 18) d. Ralph Smart w. Ian Stuart Black w/Brian Clemens, from Clemens' original st. w/Sarah Lawson, Lionel Murton, Darran Nassib. JD is involved in a wanted-dead-or-alive manhunt for an international killer.

Josefite (Sept 25) d. Michael Truman w. Ralph Smart w/Kenneth Haigh, Julia Arnall. A blind girl tracks her brother's murderer with the assistance of JD.

The Blue Veil (Oct 2) d. Charles Frennd w. Don Ingalis, Ralph Smart w/Lawrence Neimith, Lisa Gastoni, Ferdie Meyne. Investigating stories of slavery in the Arabian desert JD finds himself rescuing a stranded showgirl (JD Gastoni).

The Lovers (Oct 9) d. Peter Graham Scott w. Jo Eisinger, Doreen Montgomery w/Maxine Audley, Michael Ripper, Ewen Solon. An old enemy, Miguel Torres (Michael Ripper), asks JD to help him guard the President of Boravia during a visit to England.

Girl in Pink Pyjamas (Oct 16) d. Peter Graham Scott w. Ian Stuart Black, Ralph Smart, from st. by Brian Clemens w/Angela Brown, John Crawford, Alan Tilmann. A lovely blonde, wearing pink pyjamas, is found wandering in a dazed condition along a lonely road in a Balkan State—enter JD.

Position of Trust (Oct 23) d. Ralph Smart w. Jo Eisinger, from st. by Ralph Smart w/Donald Pleasance, Lois Maxwell. JD is off to a Middle East country to break up a ring supplying opium.

The Lonely Chair (Oct 30) d. Charles Frennd w. John Roddick, Ralph Smart w/Hazel Court, Sam Wanamaker, Richard Watts, Patrick Troughton, JD

impersonates the father of a kidnapped girl.

The Sanctuary (Nov 6) d. Charles Frennd w. John Roddick, Ralph Smart w/Kieron Moore, Wendy Williams. Another impersonation—this time JD as a prisoner released after serving a sentence for a bomb outrage.

An Affair of State (Nov 13) d. Peter Graham Scott w. Oscar Brodny w/Patrick Wymark, John Le Mesurier, Werran Mitchell. An American economics expert, sent to a small Caribbean State to check the country's gold reserves, is reported to have committed suicide—JD investigates.

The Key (Nov 20) d. Seth Holt w. Jack Whittingham, from st. by Ralph Smart w/Robert Fleming, Monica Ahrens, Charles Gray. JD is called to Vienna to investigate leakages of information in the American Embassy.

The Sisters (Nov 27) d. Seth Holt w. Jo Eisinger, from st. by Brian Clemens w/Mai Zatterling, Barbara Murray, Richard Watts, Sydney Taflar, Nadia Sander (Mai Zatterling), a refugee from a mid-European country, seeks political asylum—JD becomes suspicious when another girl arrives claiming to be her sister.

The Prisoner (Dec 4) d. Terry Bishop w. Ralph Smart, Robert Stewart w/William Sylvester, June Thorburn. JD sets up a concert pianist as a double for an American who is accused of espionage and is prisoner in the American Embassy in a Caribbean city.

The Traitor (Dec 11) d. Terry Bishop w. John Roddick w/Ronald Howard, Barbara Shelley. JD finds himself in a lonely bungalow high up a mountain in Kashmir, Northern India, with a renegade Englishman and his lovely wife.

Colonel Rodriguez (Dec 18) d. Julian Amys w. Ralph Smart w/Noel Willmen, Maxine Audley, Honor Blackman. JD poses as a journalist to help an American reporter who has been errand on a spy charge in a Caribbean country.

The Nurse (Dec 25) d. Peter Graham Scott w. Ralph Smart, Brian Clemens w/Eileen Moore, Jack MacGowan, Eric Pohlmann. JD is up to his neck again when he meets a pretty Scots nurse in the middle of the Arabian desert and helps her save a dynasty.

The Island (Jan 1, 1961) d. R. Pennington Richards w. Ralph Smart, Brian Clemens w/Allen Cuthbertson, Peter Stephens. JD is stranded on a remote island with a glamorous heiress, two professional hit-men and electronic race.

Find and Return (Jan 8) d. Seth Holt w. Jo Eisinger w/Moira Lister, Donald Pleasance, Richard Watts. JD is assigned to locate a girl in the Middle East who is wanted for espionage and high treason.

The Girl Who Liked Aps (Jan 15) d. Michael Truman w. Marc Brandel, Ralph Smart w/Anne Gaylor, Anthony Bushell, Nigel Green. JD tries to unravel the puzzle of a murdered American soldier who may have been a traitor or the victim of a plot.

Name, Date and Place (Jan 22) d. Charles Frennd w. Ralph Smart, John Roddick w/Cyril Raymond, Richard Watts. A Spanish royalist is killed in Edinburgh, a Communist diplomat in France, an Irish MP in Italy—JD is given the task of finding why all were killed in an identical manner.

Vacation (Jan 29) d. Patrick McGeehan w. Ralph Smart w/Jacqueline Ellis, Barrie Inghem. While on vacation on the Riviera JD pursues a notorious professional assassin.

The Conspirators (Feb 5) d. Michael Truman w. Ralph Smart, John Roddick w/Patricia Driscoll, Terence Longdon. JD journeys to a small remote island north of the Brittany coast to protect a young widow.

The Honeymooners (Feb 12) d. Charles Frennd w. Ralph Smart, Led Davidson w/Lee Montague, Ronald Allen, Sally Bazely. The husband of a young couple is accused of murdering a Chinese businessman on a Far Eastern island—JD is sent to cover the case.

The Gallows Tree (Feb 19) d. Michael Truman w.

Ralph Smart, Marc Brandel w/Paul Rogers, Wendy Craig, Raymond Huntley. A car stolen in Scotland leads to JD on a hunt for a masonry who was reported killed 10 years earlier.

The Released Informer (Feb 26) d. Anthony Bushell w. Ralph Smart, Robert Stewart w/Duncan Lamont, Moira Redmond. JD, trying to unravel a security leak, carries out a hold-up.

The Brothers (Mar 5) d. Charles Frennd w. Ralph Smart w/Lisa Gastoni, George Coulouris, Ronald Fraser. A plane crash sends JD off on an adventure into the Sicilian mountains.

The Journey Ends Halfway (Mar 12) d. Clive Donner w. Ian Stuart Black w/Paul Daneman, Willoughby Goddard, Anna May Wong. In the guise of a Czech engineer JD unravels the mystery behind the disappearance of a doctor who has been trying to escape from Communist China.

Bury the Dead (Mar 19) d. Clive Donner w. Ralph Smart, from st. by Brian Clemens w/Beverly Garland, Darnell Walsh. A ticket for the opera in Palermo, Sicily, takes JD into the centre of a gun-running racket.

Sabotage (Mar 26) d. Peter Graham Scott w. Michael Partwee, Ian Stuart Black w/Maggie Fitzgibbon, Yvonne Romain. JD investigates the disappearance of a transport plane.

The Contessa (Apr 2) d. Terry Bishop w. John Roddick, Ralph Smart w/Hazel Court, John Wyse, Lionel Murton. The discovery of cocaine on an injured doctor in New York sends JD to Geneva to unravel a drug racket.

The Leak (Apr 9) d. Anthony Bushell w. Ralph Smart, Brian Clemens w/Zena Marshall, Bernard Archard, Marna Maitland. JD is assigned to investigate a series of radiation sickness cases at an atomic energy plant in North Africa.

The Trap (Apr 16) d. R. Pennington Richards w. Ralph Smart, John Roddick w/Jaenna Moody, Noel Trevarth, Marie Burke. JD is sent to Venice to investigate when Bath Warren (Jaenna Moody), who works in the cipher office at the American Embassy in London, suddenly leaves for Italy without official permission.

The Actor (Apr 23) d. Michael Truman w. Marc Brandel w/Rupert Davies, Gery Cockrell. JD flies to Hong Kong to check an information leak—and ends up in a radio session as a member of a team broadcasting English lessons.

Hired Assassin (Apr 30) d. Charles Frennd w. Ralph Smart, John Roddick w/Alan Whateley, Cyril Shaps, Nyall Floranz, Judy Curn. JD masquerades as a professional assassin to prevent an attempt on the life of a foreign President.

The Coyannis Story (May 7) d. Peter Graham Scott w. Jo Eisinger w/John Phillips, Charles Gray. JD is sent to a Balkan country to discover what happened to rehabilitation money which does not seem to have been used.

Find and Destroy (May 14) d. Charles Frennd w. Ralph Smart, John Roddick w/Peter Arne, Nadja Regin. A mini submarine is wrecked off the shores of a South America country—and JD is reported to blow her up.

Under the Lake (May 21) d. Seth Holt w. Jack Whittingham w/Christopher Rhodes, Hermoine Baddeley, Moira Redmond. JD is tracking down the masterminds behind a fantastic counterfeit plot.

Dead Man Walks (May 28) d. Charles Frennd w. Ralph Smart, Brian Clemens w/Richard Watts, Maria Landi, Julia Arnall. All the members of a research team, experimenting in tropical plant diseases, have met their deaths—but when one is reported still alive JD goes to India to investigate.

Deadline (June 4) d. Peter Graham Scott w. Jo Eisinger, from st. by Ian Stuart Black w/William Marshall, Ednor Connor, Barbara Chilcott. JD plunges into the African jungle to find a native girl who may be able to help prevent a mass uprising.

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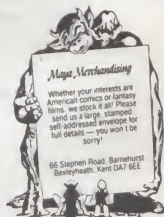
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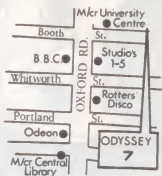
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Sleeping Beauty

Reviewed by Richard Hallis





It is now twenty-two years since *Sleeping Beauty* was first released. Since then it has been sadly neglected by students of the animated film as well as audiences and critics alike. In 1970 it had its first re-issue in Britain and has not been seen here since. Now at last cinema-goers will have a chance to see what is perhaps Walt Disney's most ambitious cartoon feature to date.

Costing a total of £3,000,000 and spanning a seven-year production schedule, Disney had high hopes for this, the least and greatest of his animated fairy tales. Presented in the lavish Technirama 70mm process, and supported by full stereophonic sound, *Sleeping Beauty* was to have heralded a new age in the art of animation. But instead, marked the end of an era at the Disney studios.

Walt Disney Productions had shown a record profit for the fiscal year 1958-9. Now it was to suffer a loss of over £1,500,000 due largely to the failure at the box office of *Sleeping Beauty*. The total gross for the film when released only amounted to £2,750,000. Disney claimed that he knew they had overspent in bringing *Sleeping Beauty* to the screen. Like *Fantasia* had been in the early forties, it was an experiment that had failed. "I sorta got trapped," he later told biographer Bob Thomas. "I had passed the point of no return and I had to go forward with it."

Critics at the time were quick to point out how the film lacked the humour and personal touches of previous Disney features. The main reason for this was probably Disney's giving less attention than usual to the project. By the Fifties, Disney was becoming more involved with live-action films. This meant that he spent more time away from the studios, especially with regard to his Disneyland project. Television was also making a big impact in Hollywood and unlike other film companies who kicked against the competition, Disney saw an opportunity to use this fast growing medium as a way to sponsor Disneyland and promote his films. His television shows became an instant success and subsequently made Disneyland one of the most popular amusement parks in America.

The *Sleeping Beauty* project had begun its life on January 19th 1950 when the title was registered with the Johnston Office, a bureau set up by the Producers Association that gave legal protection to film titles. Storymen Ted Sears, Winston Hibler, Bill Peet and Ralph Wright began work on the plot, making a study of the two best-known versions available, "Little Briar Rose" by the Brothers Grimm and "La Belle au Bois Dormant" by Charles Perrault.

With the imminent release of *Lady and the Tramp*, the first full-length cartoon in Cinemascope, and the studio's concentration on Disneyland, work on *Sleeping Beauty* stopped in 1954. During this period writers Erdman Penner and Joe Rinaldi worked on the story, developing it further, until in 1956, Disney ordered full production to begin. This spanned three years and involved the talents of 300 artists and craft specialists. Gradually the story took shape.

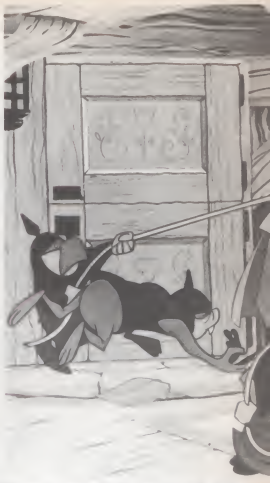
Disney wanted his artists to strive for perfection, make the characters as near to flesh and blood as was possible. To do this *Sleeping Beauty* was shot as a live-action film first, incorporating actors playing out the parts. Supervising Director was Gerry Geronimi, who came to Disney's from the Walter Lantz studios in 1930. He cast the live-action version and chose Helene Stanley to play Princess Aurora, tv actor Ed Kemmer as the Prince and Jane Fowler as Maleficent. The studio's stressed that the live-footage was

Maleficent the evil fairy is angry at King Stefan and his Queen for not being invited to their daughter Aurora's christening. She curses the child, claiming that before she is sixteen, she will prick her finger on a spinning wheel and die. The three good fairies, Flora, Fauna and Merryweather are also present. Merryweather changes the spell from death to sleep, only to be broken by love's first kiss. The King orders all the spinning wheels to be burned, but the fairies decide it would be safer still to raise Aurora in the woods away from harm.

They bring the Princess up to believe that she is just a peasant girl called "Briar Rose". They know that after her sixteenth birthday has passed, she can be returned safely to the castle. On the day of her sixteenth birthday, Aurora meets a handsome young man in the forest and it is love at first sight. She asks him to meet her at the cottage that evening.

The young man is King Hubert's son, Prince Phillip, who is unaware that this beautiful girl is Aurora, the Princess to whom he is already betrothed. The fairies return Aurora to the castle, and the Prince visiting the cottage is ambushed by Maleficent and her goons. The evil fairy also summons Aurora to the last spinning wheel in the kingdom, where she pricks her finger and falls into a deep sleep.

The fairies free the Prince from Maleficent's castle, but before he can reach his *Sleeping Beauty*, he has to slash his way through a forest of thorns and defeat Maleficent, who has now transformed herself into a colossal fire-breathing dragon.



made to give the artists inspiration and to help them with anatomy of movement, not for rotoscoping. Although certain frames would be blown up for careful study.

Some animators, Milt Kahl for instance, rejected this method. He called it "A stilted of the creative effort. Anyone worth his salt in this business ought to know how people move." Nowadays, of course, most modern animated films depend almost entirely on the rotoscope method. And it should be noted

that in *Sleeping Beauty*, it did enable the animators to spend more time on stylising the characters and elaborating on the effects.

It was also decided to present *Sleeping Beauty* in 70mm and stereophonic sound. The particular type of wide screen chosen was Technirama, a now obsolete system. Incorporating the use of two regular 35mm frames instead of one, the film would be exposed moving horizontally through the camera, rather than vertically. The image is



then printed onto normal 35mm film with the aid of an anamorphic lens, which squeezes the picture to half its width. Ub Iwerks, award-winning artist/scientist who drew one of the first Mickey Mouse cartoons, was the effects wizard who adapted the Technirama process for cartoon animation.

Use of this technique however, unlike the smaller cinemascope required for *Lady and the Tramp*, increased the cost of *Sleeping Beauty*. Artists' drawing boards had to be re-designed and pegged to accommodate larger panoramic scenes. The mathematics involved became far more intricate.

The multiplane camera was also used to create some startling effects. In short, the camera consists of different levels, each of which contains an animated cel, a transparent sheet on which the cartoon characters and foregrounds are painted. Filming vertically through these planes the camera can truck into the scenes and away again, creating a depth of field impossible with the standard animation rostrum. The opening sequences in *Pinocchio* and *Bambi* were both filmed with the camera, whilst the opening scenes in *Sleeping Beauty*, showing the castle interiors was filmed with a similar device called the horizontal camera crane. This functions like the multiplane camera but at floor level. Ub Iwerks, Bob Ferguson, E.A. Lycett and Jim Cook were in charge of photographing all the *Sleeping Beauty* sequences requiring these camera methods. In the scene where Phillip battles the goons from the windowill of Maleficent's castle, a sense of depth is achieved that could not have been accomplished if the foreground stones had been painted on the background plate.

Voices were carefully chosen to suit the animated characters. For Princess Aurora,

Disney chose opera singer and concert star, Marty Costa. The late Verna Felton, famous for her voices of the Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella* and the raucous Queen of Hearts in *Alice in Wonderland* supplied the voice of Flora, one of the three good fairies. Barbara Luddy, the voice of Lady in *Lady and the Tramp*, spoke for Merryweather, the third fairy Fauna was voiced by Barbara Jo Allen, famous comedienne of the *Bob Hope* shows. Bill Thompson, also a Disney veteran, spoke for King Hubert, whilst King Stephan, Aurora's father, was voiced by Taylor Holmes, one of Hollywood's earliest film stars. Actor Bill Shirley spoke for Prince Phillip.

Eleanor Audley was the perfect choice for Maleficent, the evil fairy, and anyone remembering her magnificent portrayal as the wicked step-mother in *Cinderella* would instantly agree. Candy Candido voiced the chief goon and babbled, with the use of multiple recording, the voices of the rest of Maleficent's evil forces.

It was decided to use Tchaikovsky's ballet score *The Sleeping Beauty*, composed in 1889, as the music for the film. Early on in the production the idea had been discarded, many at the studio felt it would be a drag on the picture. Original tunes were commissioned by outside song writers, but Disney wasn't happy with them. Finally, they returned to Tchaikovsky and the task of adapting the two-hour score to fit the visuals was handed to film composer George Bruns.

Bruno who had only recently joined the Disney studios, selected passages from the music, using it as a basis for five songs, "Once Upon a Dream", "I wonder", "Hail to the Princess Aurora", "Sleeping Beauty Song" and the King's "Skumps" song. Writers Sammy Fine and Jack Lawrence converted the famous waltz into the "Once Upon a Dream" number. Bruns said of the adaption of the score that contrary to the usual animation procedure, the music had to be fitted to the story action, the melodies adjusted to suit the scenes on the storyboards, and not the other way round.

Some of Disney's top animators were chosen to bring the characters of *Sleeping Beauty* to the screen. Ollie Johnston and Frank Thomas created the three good fairies, Flora, Fauna and Merryweather. Thomas spent considerable time studying old ladies and his observations helped them to work out the shape and look of their creations. Don DaGradi produced sketches of the fairies and Tom Oreb made the model sheets showing each character in various costumes, poses, proportions and relative sizes. These model sheets were used by the animators for reference.

Milt Kahl was given the toughest job of all — animating the Prince. Kahl is considered one of the studio's best draughtsmen, because he is able to handle realistic human movement. Marc Davis was responsible for Princess Aurora. The studio modelled her looks on those of Audrey Hepburn. Davis gave the Princess long flowing hair that bounced into shape when she moved, framing the face and giving a natural three-dimensional appearance. The folds of her clothes contained vertical lines to blend in with the backgrounds which had a look of pre-Renaissance paintings.

Davis also perfected the look of Maleficent. Because she was to transform herself into a dragon near the picture's climax, he gave her a horned headdress with a collar resembling bat wings. To heighten her evil look, her face was encircled by black cloth, whilst her robes were long and flowing shades of black and purple. Maleficent is a brilliant creation. Unlike other fairy tale villains, she is given a



compelling allure. She is also kept mostly static, and her diabolical power comes across through Eleanor Audley's excellent voice and the ominous dialogue. Maleficent's goons were initially the work of Bill Peet. Their features became more stylish as production on the film continued, gradually eliminating the more cartoonish look of the originals.

Eyvind Earle, who had recently joined Disney, painted the key backgrounds for *Sleeping Beauty*. Earle studied the work of Durer, Brueghel, Van Eyck and Botticelli. Combining the artistry and detail of Persian Art and Japanese Prints, he created some remarkable backgrounds of trees and cottages, conforming to a horizontal and vertical style. Some of these backgrounds were as wide as 15ft.

Earle also acted as the film colour artist and supervised the other artists, Thelma Witmer, Frank Armitage and Walt Peregoy who painted the remaining eight hundred or more backgrounds used in the film. Characters had to read well against the backgrounds, especially in the case of the multiple camera, so costumes required careful planning. The forest scenes were painted in numerous shades of green, whereas the sky behind the dragon was yellow to enforce the creature's terrifying appearance.

Ken Anderson devised the cataclysmic battle between the Prince and the Dragon. George Bruns combined the two sections of the ballet score to complement the action. Some of Maleficent's pre-dragon dialogue was trimmed in the final stages so as not to slow up the pace. The sound effects men needed a sound to illustrate the fiery breath of the monster, so they borrowed United States training films of flame-throwers and found precisely the sound they needed.

Bosley Crowther in the New York Times called the battle "—The noisiest and scariest go-round ever put in a Disney film." George Bruns' choice of music, Technirama 70mm and stereo sound give weight to this comment.

When the film was released in 1959 it was met with criticism and an unfortunate lack of public interest. This neglect is undeserved. The film is full of gothic horror and is a visual *tour de force*. As usual Disney had produced a film ahead of its time, like *Fantasia*, audiences would come to appreciate *Sleeping Beauty* at a later date.

Promotion for the film however was certainly remarkable, even to the point of constructing a touring exhibition explaining how the art of animation is achieved. The American Federation of Arts honouring Walt Disney sponsored the tour, costing in excess of £100,000. It celebrated the history of animation from the stone age to the *Skeleton Dance*, and was most popular in museums and universities throughout America.

Sleeping Beauty's castle also appeared as the central attraction in Disneyland and to indicate the colossal task of bringing *Sleeping Beauty* to the screen, the studio even mentioned that "It would take one artist working around the clock, 42 years to do the drawings seen on the theatre screen."

When the film was re-issued in America in 1979, Irving Ludwig, President of Disney's distribution arm reported in *Variety* that the film should take up to £3,000,000 in rentals. In fact in the summer 1970 re-issue the film had already tallied rentals of £1,500,000.

Whatever the criticisms may be, *Sleeping Beauty* remains to this day the most technically perfect of the post-war Disney films. A lasting tribute to his studio's unflagging dedication and more importantly to Walt Disney's own dream, a dream to elevate the animated film into a recognised art form.







UN FILM DE JEAN ROLLIN. PRODUCTION FILMS MODERNES ET FILMS A.B.C.